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THE NEW YORKER

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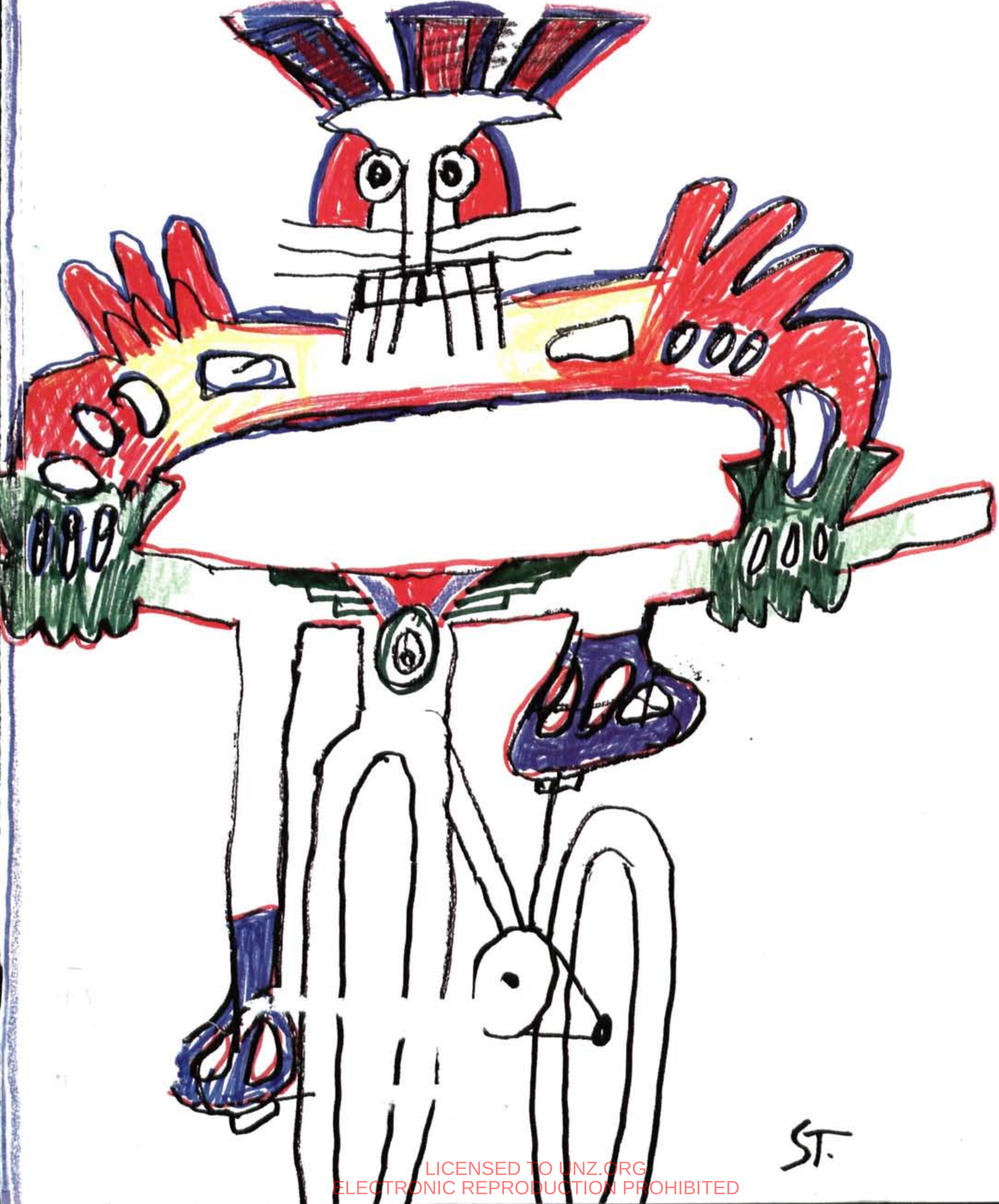

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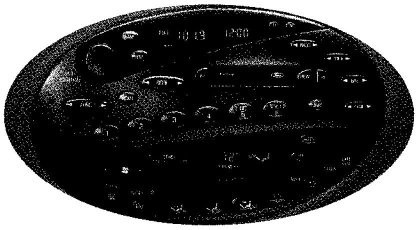

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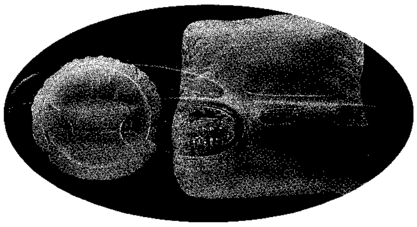

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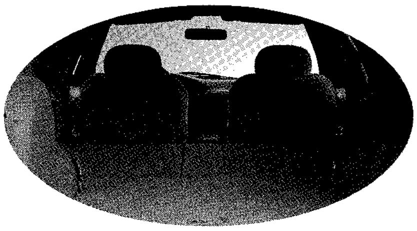

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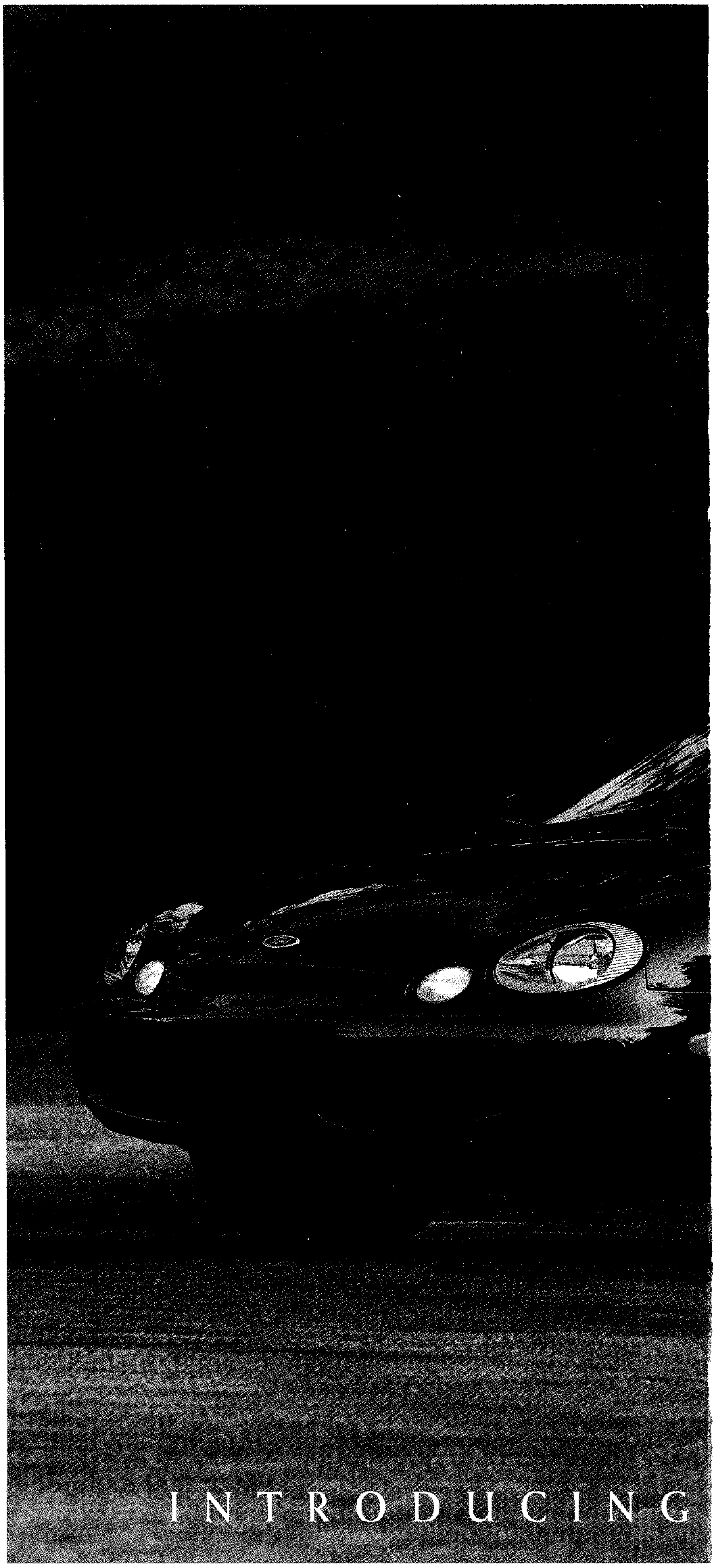

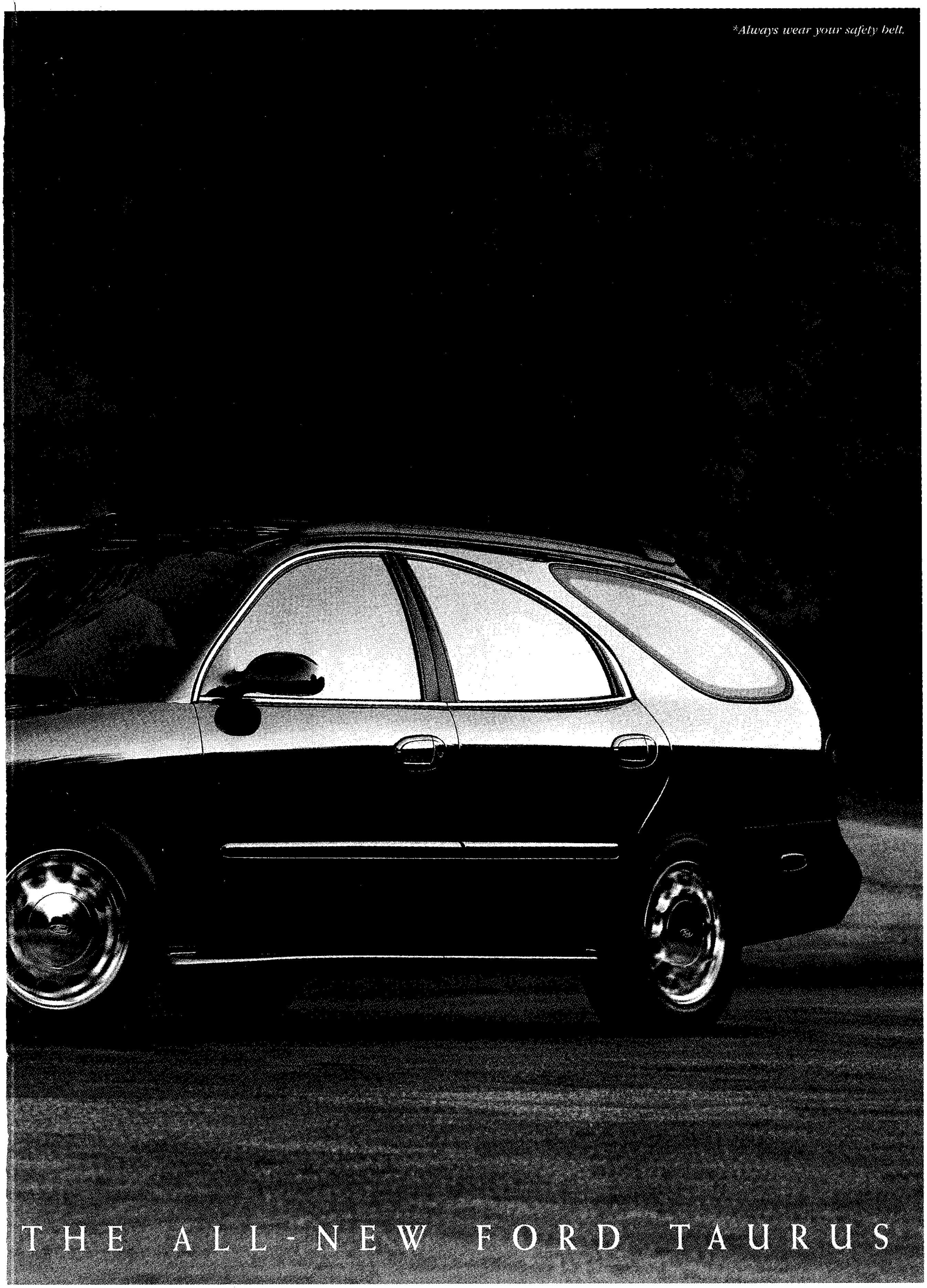
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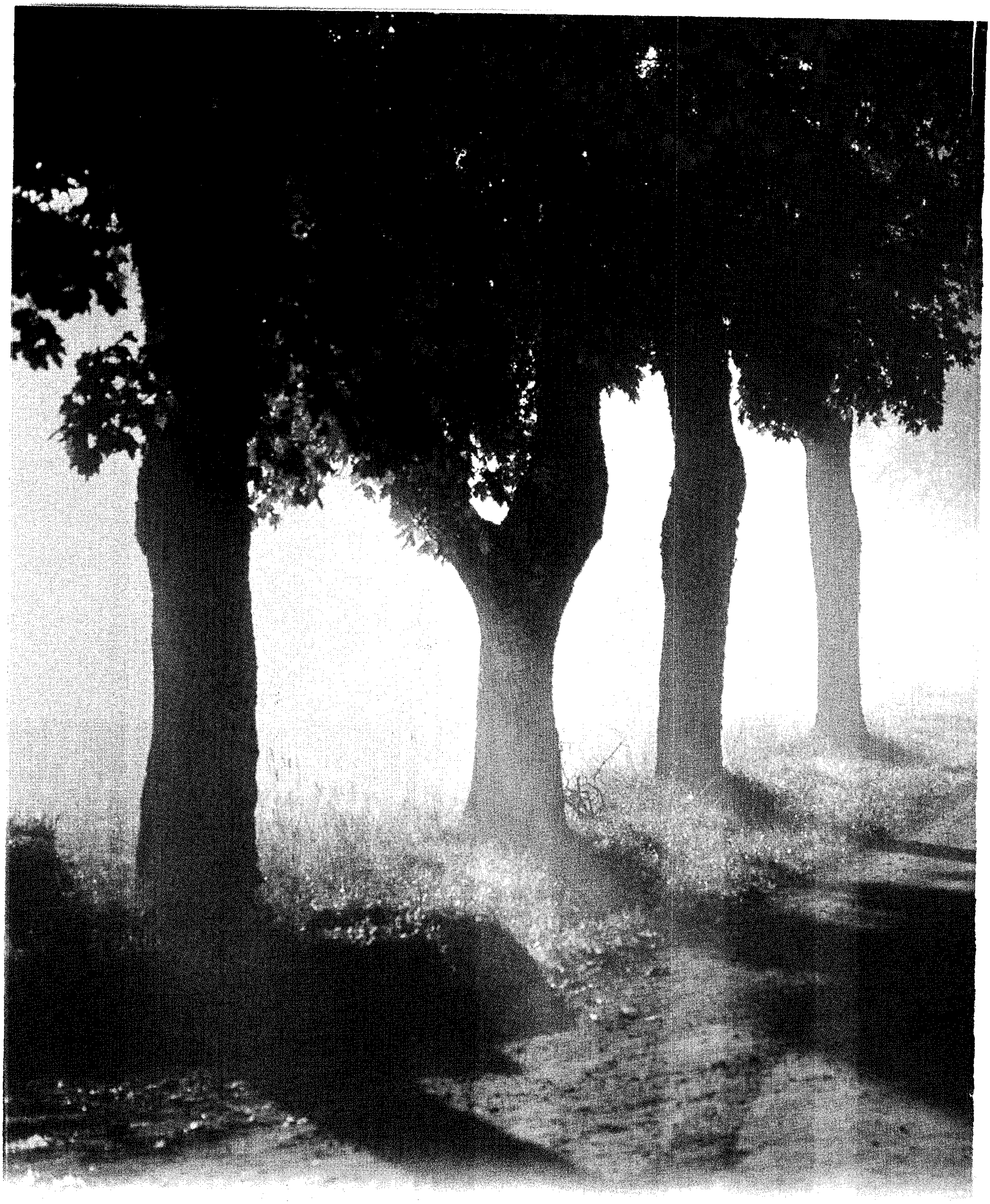

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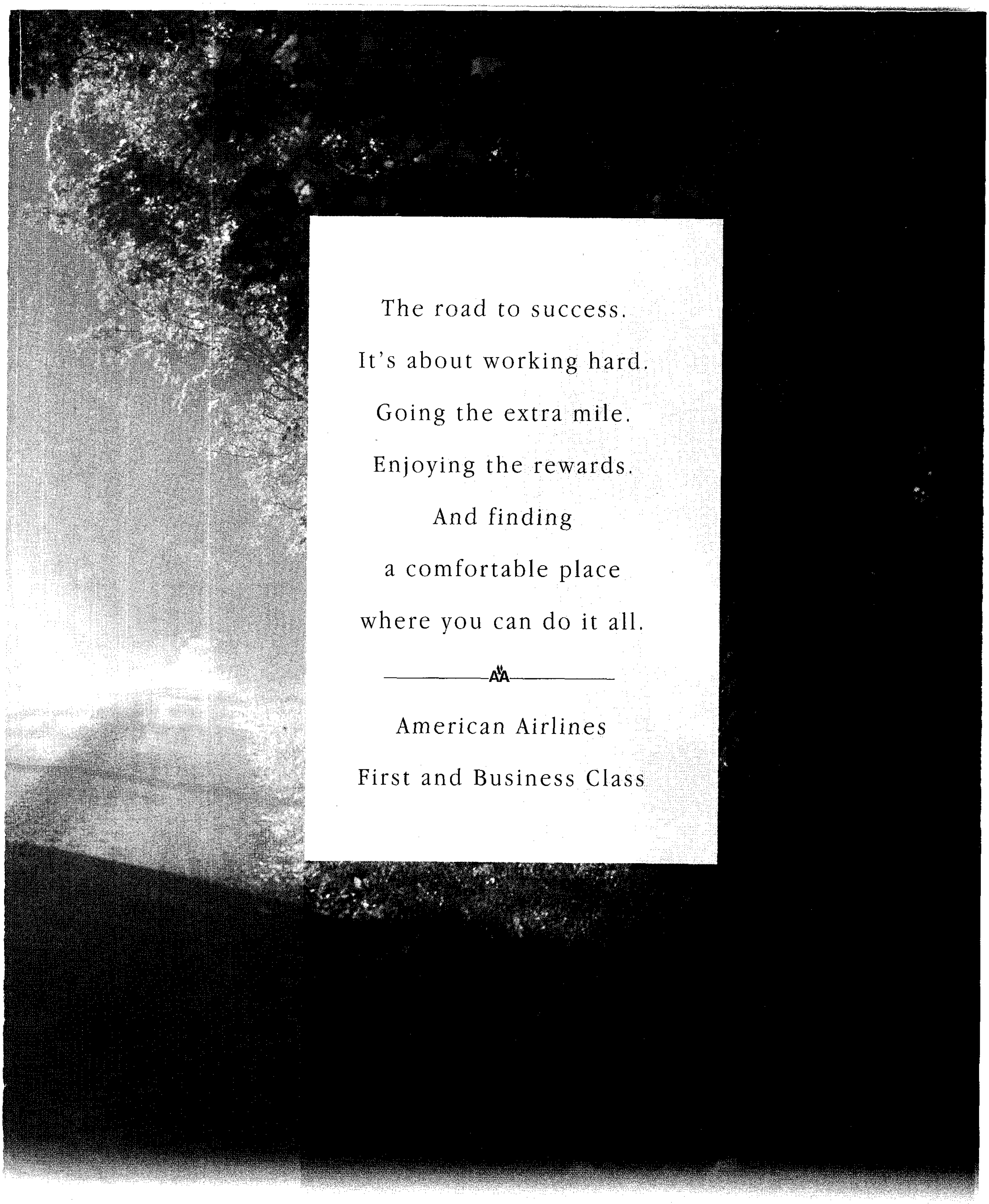
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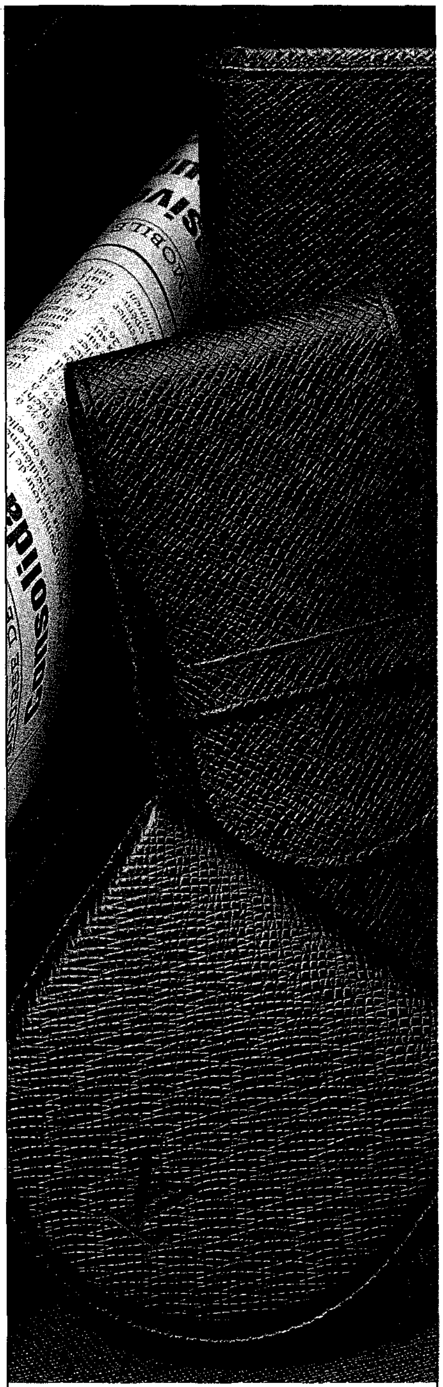

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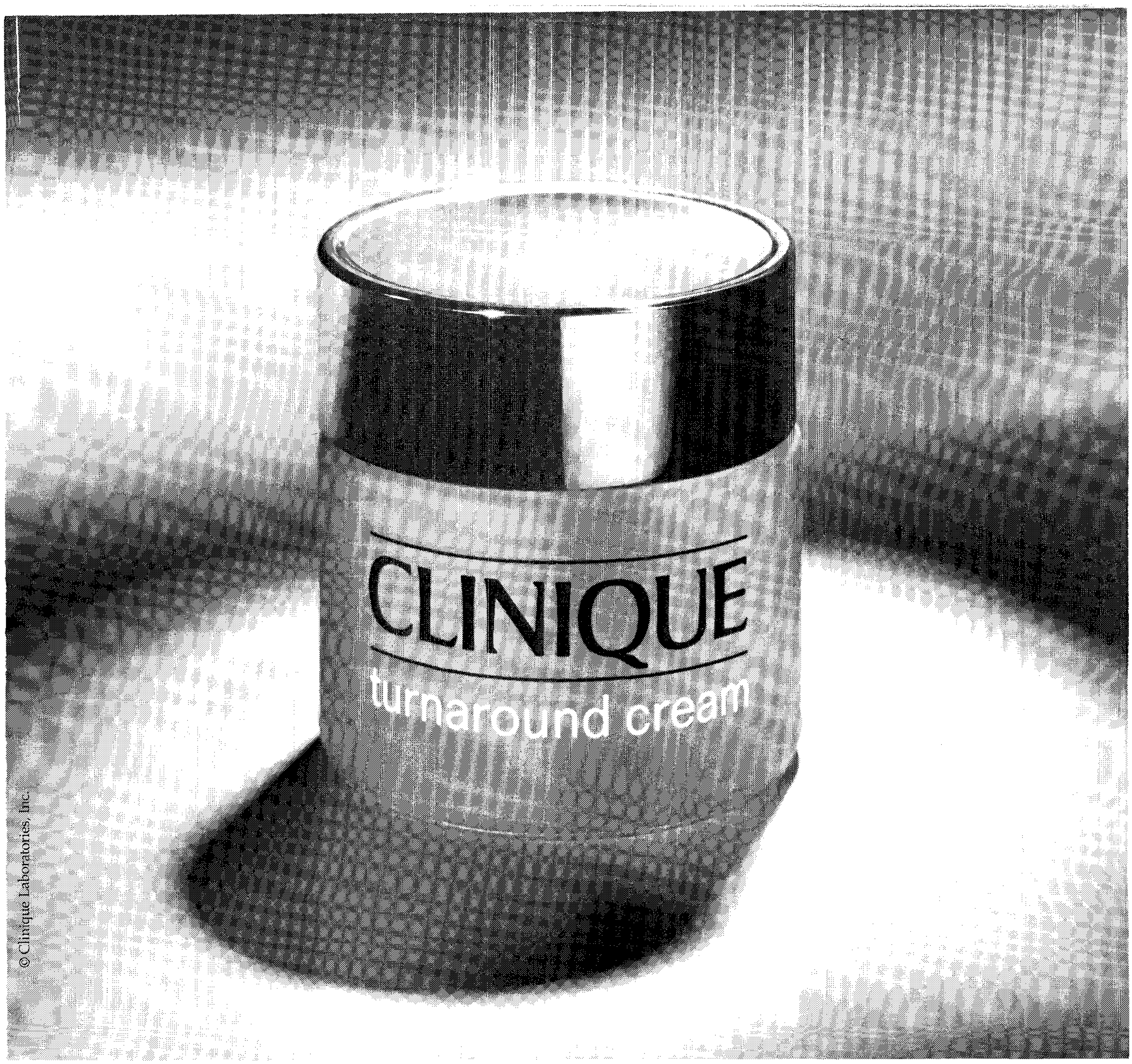
THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly (except for four combined issues: the last week of December and the first week of January, the last two weeks of February, the last week of June and the first week of July, and the last two weeks of August) by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc., 20 W. 43rd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10036. Vol. LXXI, No. 37, November 20, 1995. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Canadian Publication Mail Sales Product Agreement No.190969. Canadian goods-and-services-tax registration number R123242885. Registered as a newspaper at the British Post Office. Subscription rates: In U.S. and possessions, one year, $36.00; two years, $60.00. In Canada, one year, $77.00 (includes G.S.T.). In Germany, one year, DM290. Mail orders to: IP Internationle Presse, Distribution & Marketing GmbH, Waldstr. 70, D-63128 Dietzenbach, Germany. Other foreign, one year, $85.00, payable in advance.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The New Yorker, Box 56447, Boulder, Colorado 80322. PRINTED IN U.S.A.



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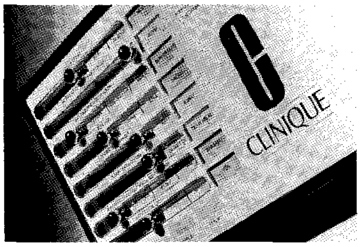

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REASONS TO MOURN

What Rabin's assassin was and, more disturbingly, was not.

In the early morning of November 5th, hours after the murder of Yitzhak Rabin, the streets of Israel's cities were full of people holding candles and weeping. Late in the evening of November 6th, the square in Tel Aviv where Rabin had been shot still held nearly as many people—most of them young, still holding candles, still weeping—as had come there two days earlier to rally in support of the peace process. The assassination of a political leader is bound to stir the emotions, but this outpouring was more than might have been expected, for Rabin himself was a dour man, who—in public, at least—rarely showed emotion; the only feeling he spontaneously displayed was irritation with his political opponents.

The reason people were so deeply disturbed, journalists reported, was that Rabin was murdered by a fellow-Jew. This was the first assassination of an Israeli leader in the country's forty-seven years: a barrier broken. A scene on the ground which was captured on camera just before the shooting has an allegorical quality: the Prime Minister's bodyguards are all looking in the same direction, outward, while the killer is waiting behind them, inside the circle of security.

Still, there is something else about this killing that is especially disturbing, especially frightening. It's not only what the assassin was but also what he wasn't. Yigal Amir was a Jew, but he wasn't a crazy Jew. He wasn't a participant in some mad cult, wasn't the product of sectarian delusion; at his preliminary hearing, he disarmingly described himself as having acted alone in shooting Rabin, "but maybe with God's help." In fact it seems he did not act alone. He and his militant friends came out of the mainstream religious right; they attended rallies along with thousands of other protesters, carried the same banners, shouted the same slogans, believed the same doctrines. The only crazy quality they had was the literalism that turned rhetorical violence into the real thing.

The political economist Albert Hirschman has written an illuminating book on "The Rhetoric of Reaction"—an account of the content and cadence of standard right-wing arguments. But

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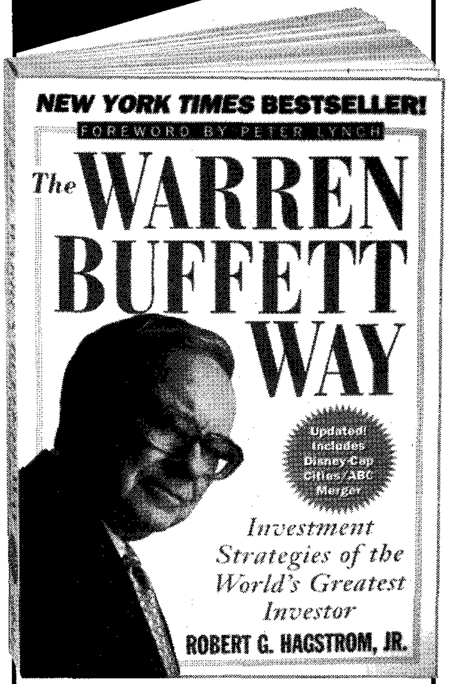

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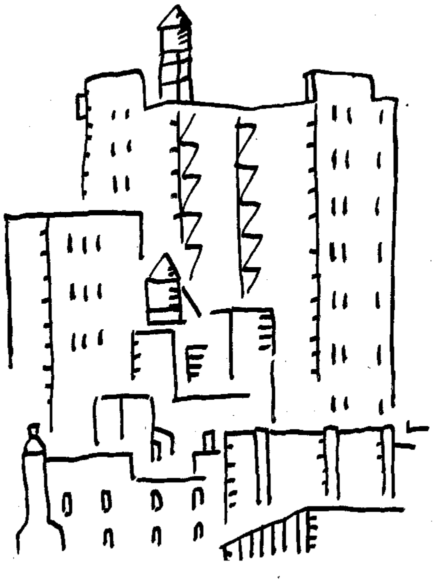
there is one rhetorical device that he doesn't give attention to, probably because it is not really argumentative; namely, exclusion, the claim that one's political opponents are "enemies of the people," traitors, who can't be argued with and have to be dealt with in some other way. Exclusion is a strategy of the left, too: it was the precondition of Stalin's purges. But in Israel today it best answers the needs of the religious and nationalist right. When the nation and its land are identified as sacred, any suggestion of political compromise, any attempt at a politics of give-and-take, is readily viewed as an act of betrayal.

Since the peace process began, Israel's far right has attempted systematically to describe the government and its allies as traitors to God and to Zion. The message is simple and direct, as in a favorite bumper sticker that adorned thousands of cars throughout Israel before the assassination: "*Rabin boged*"—"Rabin is a traitor." (The stickers vanished overnight; one might say, however, that they had done their work.) And the near right, the parliamentary opposition, has sought to benefit from this description without quite endorsing it. The leaders of Likud have found the extremists distasteful, and have sometimes said so, but they did not refuse to speak at rallies where banners were prominently displayed condemning Rabin and his partner (now his successor), Shimon Peres, as traitors and murderers. And they have never told their supporters what their supporters most need to hear if there is ever to be peace in the land: that God is not engaged in Israel's internal debate about its future borders, nor has He appointed the Palestinians as His, or Israel's, eternal enemies.

Rabin's assassination is most disturbing and frightening in that it represents the next step in the debasement of Israeli political life by religious zealotry—the transformation of an already unrestrained domestic debate into a kind of holy war, where good confronts evil, hostility is permanent, and the enemy is always conspiring with fainthearted or false friends. As in the American world of right-wing militias, Aryan nations, and millenarian Christians, so in Israel today: the war is expressed first in feverish language and then in "coldhearted" action. (The adjective comes from Amir's statement to a Tel Aviv court.) Most of the people who use such language or encourage its use surely do not intend its brutal enactment. But language has its own intentionality: words, once spoken, find their own agents.

Yitzhak Rabin represented what might be called the absolute opposite of this kind of politics. He was a sombre and mostly taciturn rationalist; he embodied calculation and restraint. His intellectual style was analytic; he was most at home in intricate discussions of strategy and tactics. He mapped alternatives in endless detail; he never moved without carefully considering his options. Often in his career, his critics felt that he lacked one quality crucial to a political leader: it seemed as if he had never read that line from the Book of Proverbs "Where there is no vision, the people perish." He would probably have said in response, "Where there is no prudence, visions are dangerous."

But at the end of his life all his caution and calculation were brought into the service of a visionary politics. To be sure, he did not get to that politics until he had exhausted the alternatives, but when he decided that it was necessary he embraced it: achieving peace with the Palestinians and with the P.L.O. was the dominant theme of his last years. The combination of prudence and vision made for a strong foreign policy and also—this is why the November 4th rally in Tel Aviv was such a happy occasion—for what looked more and more like a successful domestic politics. It was partly represented by Rabin's odd-couple partnership with Peres, but it was also internalized, at least by Rabin. We have to hope now that Peres has achieved the same combination, that he will press the peace process forward with a cautious enthusiasm.



One can imagine a similar combination on the right. Israel's security problems do not have a single, obviously correct solution. Rabin remained a worrier, like any rational person in the Middle East today. He could have been opposed on his own ground, except that in Israel he was widely regarded as the master of that ground: Mr. Security. So the right expresses its politics mostly in visionary terms, and the visions are characteristically different from those on the left, and dangerous in different ways. Visionaries of the left count too much on the coming peace; visionaries of the right count too much on the ongoing war. A strange national and religious materialism prevails on the right today, and not only in Israel. Rightist visions there are more geographical than moral or political: they are visions of Greater Israel, occupying its God-given land, and permanently at war, for the sake of the land, with people whose enmity is without end. The settler zealots who have made themselves the vanguard of right-wing politics are often celebrated as idealists, even by critics who call them misguided, but they are in fact gross materialists, committed more to living in a certain place than to living in a certain way. They are idealistic only with regard to the consequences of their choice: they confidently expect a divine rescue. Their secular nationalist allies no doubt have different expectations. They seem to be buoyed up and sustained by the idea of permanent conflict, both foreign and domestic—much like those American right-wingers who wanted the Cold War never to end, at least in part so that they could continue to unmask enemy sympathizers at home.

Life in Israel today makes one long for a naked public square: politics without God, without myth and fantasy, without eternal enemies, without sacred causes or holy ground. Would it be boring? Maybe so, but for now, at least, political pragmatism is not without its own excitements, as Yitzhak Rabin proved when he sent his ambassadors to Oslo. This is the way he should be remembered: he loved his country with such a passion that he was prepared to think coolly about its future.

—Michael Walzer

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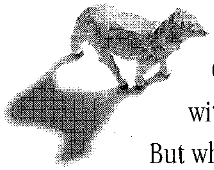

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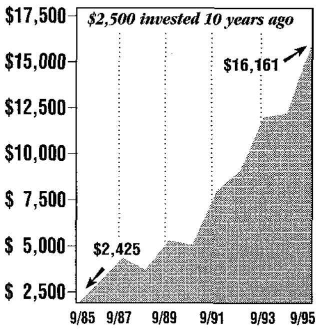

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IN THE MAIL

NEWT NOTES

Connie Bruck's piece on Newt Gingrich ("The Politics of Perception," October 9th) was timely and perceptive. It was probably in the cards that a society like ours, with its presumption and greed, would at some time be seized upon by someone like him—a small, manipulative man skating on the thinnest intellectual ice. We may hope that Bruck's admirable effort will go far to cut him down to size. Perhaps this would-be emperor is less extravagantly caparisoned than his tailors would have us believe.

Frederic E. Pamp
Santa Barbara, Calif.

I had been reading a biography of Fidel Castro and put it down to pick up Connie Bruck's article on Newt Gingrich. Halfway through, I had to check what I was reading, for the parallels between Gingrich and the young, power-hungry Castro are eerie. Their claims that they lead in the name of the people are identical, and the result, at least in one case, is unquestionably disastrous.

Kathy Pyatt
Kalamazoo, Mich.

Connie Bruck just doesn't get it, in spite of her muckraking interviews. Newt is Speaker because the majority of productive Americans want him to be. His agenda is simple: to help those who need help and find some way to cure our society's ills other than by ineffectively throwing money at them. Gingrich is the worst nightmare of the liberal caretakers who have been infesting a lot of our government offices. I wish we had a hundred more like him!

Tom Cooper
Marietta, Ga.

Gingrich says he prides himself on his skill in listening. As a therapist who has worked with many adolescents, I am reminded of their complaints about parents: they listen, but they don't hear.

Jean G. Wattenberg
Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

DEFENDING THE FAITH

Whatever the Pope's doctrinal inflexibility and expectations of obedience, they hardly stem from his Polish origins, as Colm Tóibín argues ("The Paradoxical Pope," October 9th). That the nineteen-fifties, the Pope's formative years as a priest, were "quiet" in Poland was a result of Stalinist oppression, not an expression of some innate Polish characteristic. In addition, Poles formed Solidarity, which became the first nationwide opposition movement in the Communist world; and even now Poles cannot be said to be complaisant. Nor is Polish Catholicism: polls regularly reveal that most Poles, especially the younger generation, disagree with the papal positions on contraceptives and divorce. Tóibín would do well to depend less on a "sense that everyone was at home, living quietly, timidly obeying the rules" and more on solid research.

Anna Grzymala-Busse
Cambridge, Mass.

Colm Tóibín's statement that Catholics "who want change in the Church are waiting for John Paul II to die" is a vulgarity beyond comprehension. It is possible to disagree with certain papal decrees without waiting for the death of our beloved John Paul II.

Sue Masson
Miami, Fla.

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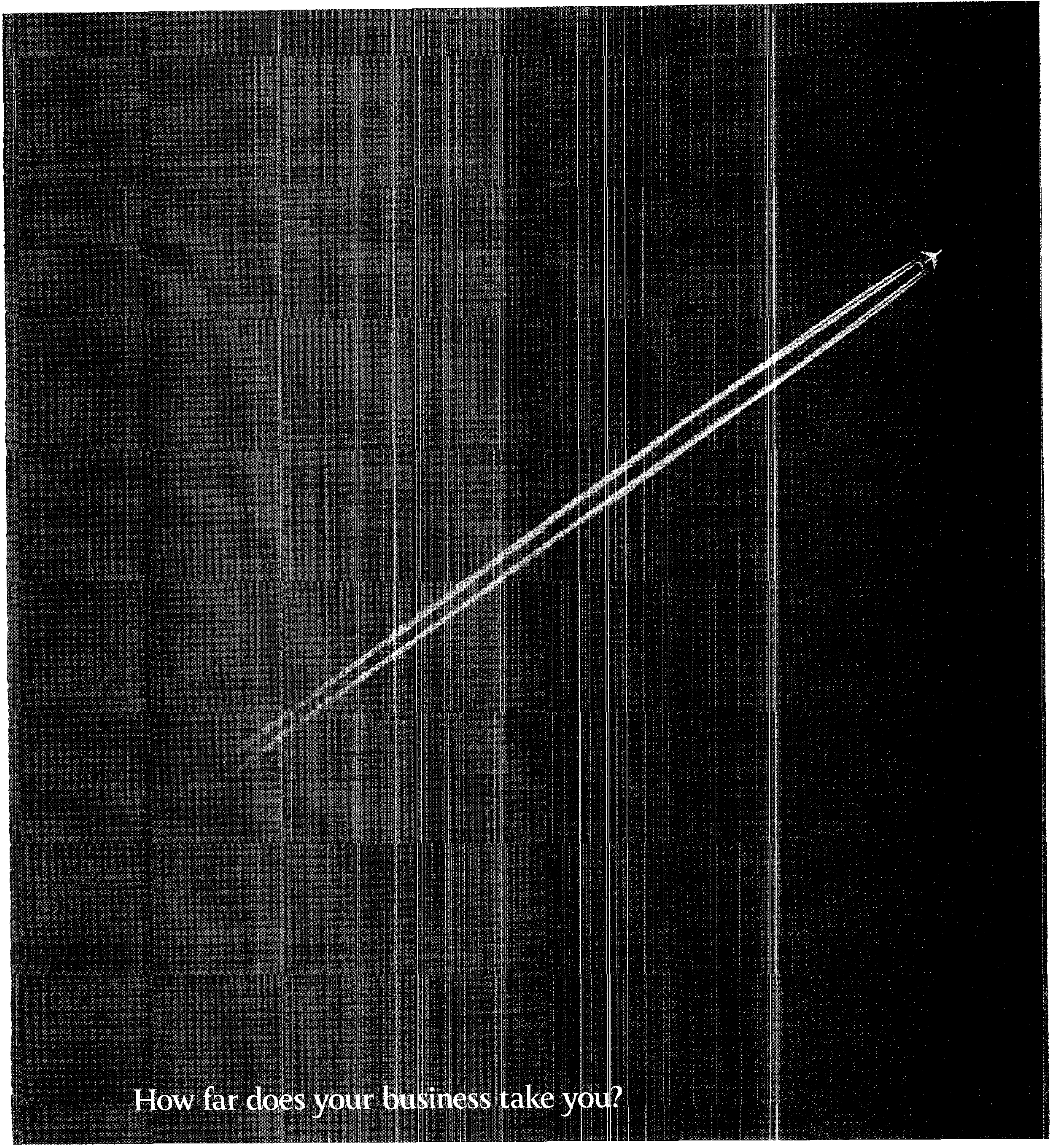

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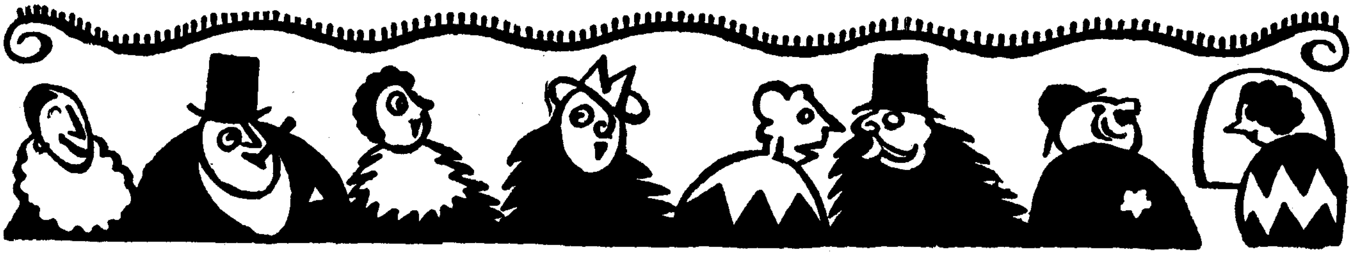

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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			15	16	17	18
19	20	21				

THE THEATRE

Full Nelson

If it's true (as some Europeans like to say) that culture is dying in the Old World but is already dead in the New, then the characters—seven Britons and one Frenchwoman—in Richard Nelson's biting "New England" (at Manhattan Theatre Club) are poring over the remains. The drama opens with a sudden death at a Connecticut country house. Over the ensuing weekend, the eight mourners prepare for the memorial, but instead of consoling each other they tell lies, inflict wounds, and generally enact this American playwright's specialty: the harsh comedy of cultural displacement.

The dead man's son (T. Scott Cunningham), a screenplay reader, blasts illiteracy in Hollywood. The grieving girlfriend (Penny Fuller), who has left publishing, decries American editorial standards. And her ex-brother-in-law (Tom Irwin), a dialect coach, lampoons the ineptitude of American actors—a failing that this crack cast belies. The crowning irony, of course, is that these characters' exile is self-imposed. They've *chosen* to live here: better the expansive vulgarity of America than the petty narrowness of England. Nelson's brand of socially concerned irony has advanced his career in London (where "New England" was first produced) but hasn't always been appreciated in New York; "New England" has an unsparing intelligence that should be a tonic to audiences on either shore.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Bring In 'Da Noise, Bring In 'Da Funk—A new musical by tap virtuoso Savion Glover, spoken-word artist Reg E. Gaines, and director George C. Wolfe, which stars Glover and Gaines. Opens Nov. 15 at 8. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

Golden Boy—Joanne Woodward directs a revival of Clifford Odets' 1937 drama about a young Italian-American violinist who gives up music for the boxing ring. Previews begin Nov. 19. (45th Street Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 279-4200.)

Holiday—Tony Goldwyn and Laura Linney head the cast in a revival of Philip Barry's 1929 comedy, directed by David Warren. Previews begin Nov. 18. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

Jam On the Groove—A hip-hop musical by Ghett-Original, a company founded by former members of Magnificent Force, Rock Steady Crew, and the Rhythm Technicians. Preview on Nov. 15. Opens Nov. 16 at 6:45. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

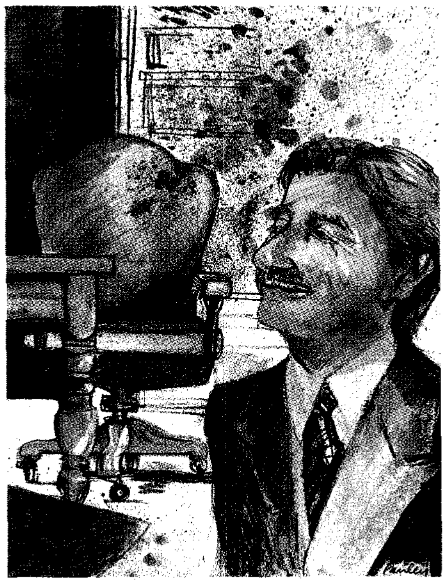
Juno and the Paycock—Sean O'Casey's 1924 tragicomedy, in an Irish Rep production directed by Charlotte Moore. In previews through Nov. 18. Opens Nov. 19 at 7. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

Nunsense—The musical about the order of the Little Sisters of Hoboken, who stage a talent show to raise cash for their convent, gets a limited-run revival directed by Dan Goggin, who wrote the music, book, and lyrics. Opens Nov. 17 at 8. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Oblivion Postponed—John Glover and Mary Beth Hurt lead the cast in Ron Nyswaner's comedy-drama about a straight Ohio couple and a gay New York couple who meet while vacationing in Rome. In previews. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103.)

Por' Knockers—A group of political activists inadvertently kill several children when they blow up a government building, in Lynn Nottage's latest play. In previews through Nov. 18. Opens Nov. 19 at 7:30. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

Quills—A new drama by Doug Wright, in which the Marquis de Sade outsmarts the would-be censors who run the insane asylum to which he has been committed. Directed by Howard Shalwitz. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)



Larry Bryggman, in "New England."

LYNN PAULEY

Racing Demon—In David Hare's play, a group of Anglican clergymen confronts the problems of operating a parish in inner-city London. Directed by Richard Eyre. In previews through Nov. 19. Opens Nov. 20 at 6:45. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

The School for Scandal—The Acting Company's staging of Sheridan's 1777 comedy of manners stars Simon Jones and Tony Randall. In previews through Nov. 18. Opens Nov. 19 at 3. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6280.)

The Warm-Up—Sammy Shore's one-man comedy about his career as the opening act for such stars as Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, and Sammy Davis, Jr. Martin Landau directed. In previews through Nov. 18. Opens Nov. 19 at 8. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Antigone—With a clamorous staging of Sophocles' tragedy, the Pearl Theatre has fulfilled its commitment to present the author's three Theban plays. Robin Leslie Brown plays the morally upright outlaw heroine who, against the orders of the tyrant Creon (Robert Hock), gives her brother a proper burial. This prototypical drama of the individual versus the state relies less, in the Pearl's production, on the Greek art of cool persuasion than on heated rebuttals and countercharges. Shepard Sobel directed. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes Dec. 9.)

Black Girl—Leslie Uggams plays Mama Rosie, in J. E. Franklin's drama about a seventeen-year-old high-school dropout up against her family's expectations. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 598-0400.)

Carthieves! Joyrides!—Deb Margolin's latest solo work, which she calls "a midlife meditation on cars, sex, mortality, memory, and baseball." Thursdays through Sundays, through Nov. 26. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

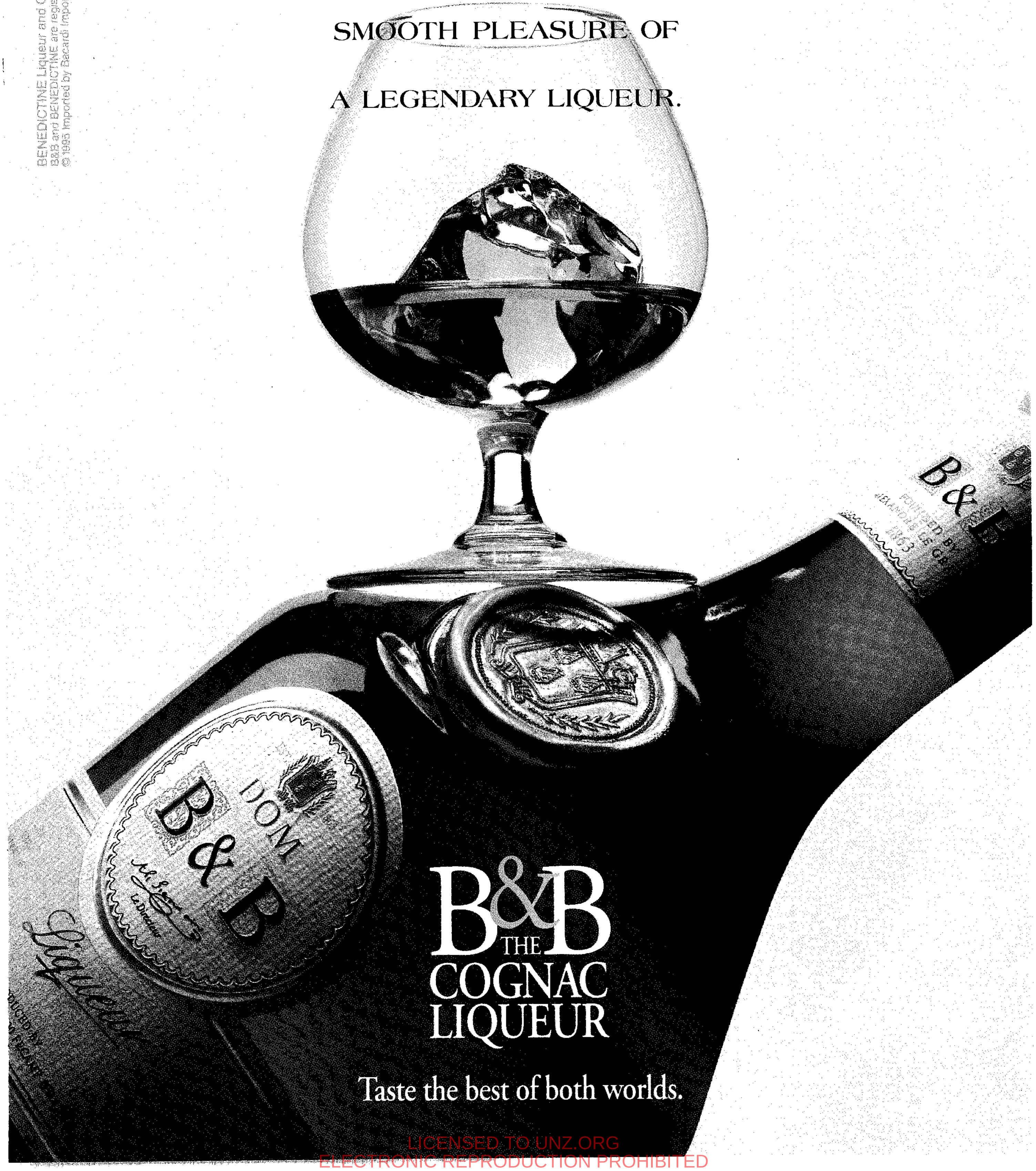
Chinoiserie—Part two of Ping Chong's multimedia trilogy, about the historical clash of Eastern and Western cultures, continues through Nov. 18. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100.)

Company—The god of casting doesn't shine on the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Stephen Sondheim and George Furth's 1970 musical, but nothing can dim the brilliance of a score whose themes of fear, loneliness, and anxiety in relationships have become more urgent as the battle between the sexes has intensified. In the show's best-written scene, Veanne Cox, as a would-be bride, knocks the audience dead when she crawls across the floor, pale and bug-eyed, and sings "Getting Married Today." Directed by Scott Ellis. (Reviewed in our issue of 10/23/95.) (Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Cuba Libre—A song-and-dance celebration with three preëminent stars of the Cuban stage—the singer Annia Linares, the dancer Sonia Calero, and the singer and pianist Meme Solis—who together set a very Old Country mood. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Dangerous Corner—J. B. Priestley's 1932 mystery—in which a gathering turns ugly when a group of dinner guests cross over the line of proper party talk—is a meditation on the fragile interconnectedness of people's lives. But as directed by David Mamet, the char-

TASTE THE WARMTH
OF FINE COGNAC
BLENDED WITH THE
SMOOTH PLEASURE OF
A LEGENDARY LIQUEUR.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acters don't seem connected at all. Most mysteries move with snap; Mamet has given this one a depressed pace that allows you to guess the worst before it is, inevitably, revealed. The real mystery is why everyone onstage seems so strangely wooden. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

Danny Gans on Broadway—The impressionist makes his Broadway début. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Double Identity—The Folksbiene Playhouse presents a new Yiddish musical. Simultaneous translations in English and in Russian will be available. (123 E. 55th St. 755-2231.)

The Food Chain—In Nicky Silver's new play, the paths of five New Yorkers cross, hilariously. The situations are familiar and sitcomish, but the writing is tangy and memorably funny, and the actors—especially Hope Davis, as a dithery poet, and Phyllis Newman, as a long-suffering Jewish matron whose idea of listening is to talk—give smart, wonderfully fresh performances. Robert Falls directed. (9/11/95) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

Fool Moon—Clowning and music with Bill Irwin, David Shiner, and North Carolina's Red Clay Ramblers, who have returned to Broadway with their 1993 show. (Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

Full Gallop—Mary Louise Wilson's vibrant and unexpectedly touching portrayal of Diana Vreeland, whose will and imagination were let loose for several decades at *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*. Wilson, who co-wrote the script with Mark Hampton, re-creates the dash, verve, and inspired vulgarity with which D.V. went at the world. "Delightful, delicious, *divine*!" Directed by Nicholas Martin. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes Nov. 19.)

Hello, Dolly!—Carol Channing reprises the role of Dolly Levi, which she created in the 1963 musical. Lee Roy Reams directs. (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

June and Jean in Concert—The Signature Theatre Company's Adrienne Kennedy season continues with the playwright's autobiographical play about two sisters. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

Master Class—Zoe Caldwell is Maria Callas in Terrence McNally's examination of the diva as teacher. Leonard Foglia is the director. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Memorandum—Václav Havel's scathing 1966 play, an indictment of bureaucracy and its abuses, in a rousing production by the Independent Theatre Company. The office-from-hell at the play's core, rife with conspiracies and betrayals, is well served by a white labyrinthine set, where the actors pace like trapped animals. Though the acting shades, at times, into histrionics, there are strong performances by Mary Coburn as a villainous technocrat, Seth Rosmarin as her henchman, and Aviva Stei as a secretary who is interested only in her next meal. Michelle Gigante directed. (House of Candles Theatre, 99 Stanton St. 353-3088. Closes Nov. 25.)

Mrs. Klein—Uta Hagen stars in a suspense drama by Nicholas Wright, about the death, in 1934, of psychoanalyst Melanie Klein's son. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

The Monogamist—A poet discovers that his wife is having an affair with one of her students, in Christopher Kyle's satirical comedy. Directed by Scott Elliott. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

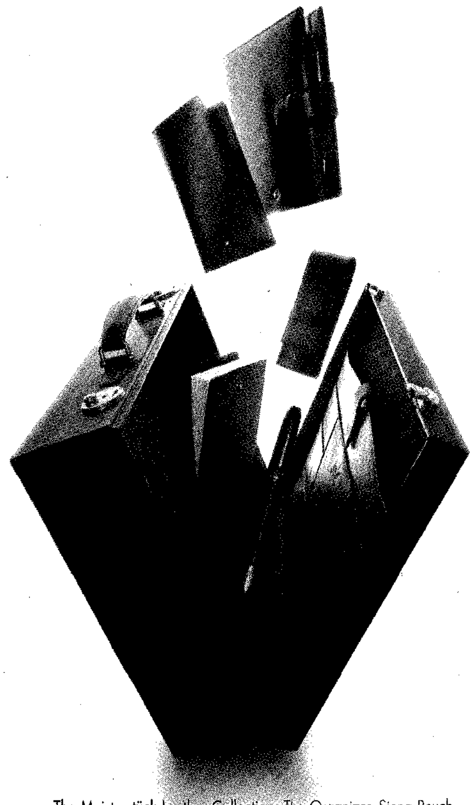
Moon Over Buffalo—Carol Burnett, whose last Broadway appearance was thirty years ago (Carol, please don't let that happen again), and Philip Bosco star as husband-and-wife actors in Ken Ludwig's backstage farce, set in a small Buffalo theatre in the early fifties. The play is as forgettable as Burnett is not—our reigning red-headed queen of comedy is delightful to behold. Bosco gives good support as her bluff, egotistical hubby. Also with Jane Connell (who has the thankless job of playing a character whose only function is to be hard of hearing), Randy Graff, and Dennis Ryan. Tom Moore directed. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Moonlight—In Harold Pinter's first full-length play since 1978, Jason Robards is both avuncular and acrimonious in the role of a dying man whose sons refuse to visit him; Blythe Danner, who plays his wife, conveys silent torment through her superbly expressive eyes. The director, Karel Reisz, has excavated the suffering beneath their sarcasm and perfectly captured Pinter's sense of dread. Also with Melissa Chalsma, Barry McEvoy, and Liev Schreiber. (11/6/95) (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Moscow Stations—Tom Courtenay plays equal parts underground man and commuting mixologist, in an anecdotal two-act monologue adapted from the 1969 samizdat novel (published in 1980) by Venidikt Yerofeyev. Courtenay's loquacious drinker isn't just a barstool metaphysician: his dignified, unresigned spirit always shines through. Ian Brown directed. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100. Closes Nov. 26.)

Murder at Minsing Manor: A Nancy-Boys Mystery—Another antic romp by the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, in which an aging temptress (Everett Quinton) may or may not have dispatched her sugar daddy. Some of the jokes are more subtle than others, but the satire of church, state, and the Hardy Boys is right on target. Written by the brothers Michael and Richard Simon and directed by Chuck Brown. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 239-6200.)

Nathan the Wise—An unfocussed but startlingly relevant production of Gotthold



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"The business of every art is to bring something into existence."

Aristotle

MONT BLANC
THE ART OF WRITING

Ephraim Lessing's 1779 plea for religious tolerance—a soap opera with theology. Craig Smith's performance as the title character balances these competing concerns and gives the show what power it has. Runs in repertory with a solid production of Beckett's "Waiting for Godot." (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

New England—A dark comedy by Richard Nelson, about a family of English transplants at odds with America. Directed by Howard Davies. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Northeast Local—Tom Donaghy's play, which begins in the early sixties and ends in the early nineties, stars Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio and Anthony LaPaglia as a working-class couple who come together and then break apart. (The terrific period costumes, by Jane Greenwood, indicate the march of time with great accuracy.) Both the writing and the performances make for an uneven evening. The wan Mastrantonio, as an open-minded woman, comes across as almost simpleminded (lines like "Everything's changing, Mick—the whole world is changing" don't help). LaPaglia, on the other hand, is becoming one of those actors who never make a wrong move and yet are totally alive, and he gives the play an authenticity it wouldn't otherwise have. Also with Terry Alexander and Eileen Heckart, who is dead on as Mickey's acid mother. Gerald Gutierrez directed. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Old, Wicked Songs—An American pianist in Vienna undergoes a spiritual awakening, in a new play by Jon Marans. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000. Closes Nov. 19.)

Patti LuPone on Broadway—With her Garland-size renditions of her musical-theatre triumphs ("Don't Cry for Me, Argentina"; "As If We Never Said Goodbye"), the star confirms her place among the divas on the midtown marquees. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Picasso at the Lapin Agile—Steve Martin's comedy, set in a Paris bar in 1904, is not so much a play of ideas as a play of notions, about art, science, the twentieth century (oh, *that* old thing); it features two wild and crazy guys—Einstein and Picasso—sittin' around talkin' about how they're going to change the world, and contains a satisfying amount of Martin's coolly absurdist humor. Mark Nelson is a delightful, sparky Einstein, but Tim Hopper's Picasso is a big bore—The Artist Who Came to Dinner. The secondary characters are well drawn and, under the direction of Randall Arney, well played by, among others, Peter Jacobson, John Christopher Jones, Rondi Reed, and Harry Groener. Yet there's a sourness to the proceedings which may put you off, unless you happen to believe, as Martin seems to, that the arrival of rock and roll ruined everything. Say it ain't so, Steverino. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

Private Lives—A Pan Asian Repertory Theatre production of Noël Coward's comedy. (Playhouse 46 at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 245-2660. Closes Nov. 18.)

Riff Raff—In this drama written and directed by Laurence Fishburne, three desperate men (Fishburne, Titus Welliver, and Heavy D) hole up on the Lower East Side and sort through the residue of a botched robbery attempt. The play strains to make its point about the way loyalties shift among old friends, and the direction is often not as taut as it might be, but there are enough white-hot moments to hold the audience's interest. Heavy D's rap recitation late in the show is worth the price of admission. (Circle Repertory Company, 159 Bleecker St. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 3.)

Sacrilege—Ellen Burstyn, Giancarlo Esposito, and Herb Foster star in a new play by Diane Shaffer, about a Manhattan nun who wants to become a priest. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Splendora—A new musical directed by Jack Hofsiss and choreographed by Robert LaFosse, about a man who returns to his hometown with an enigmatic woman and an urge to delve into his past. (American Place Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200. Closes Nov. 19.)

Swinging on a Star—A stylish, heartfelt showcase for Johnny Burke's songs, which include "Pennies from Heaven," "Misty," and "Thank Your Lucky Stars and Stripes." The cast and band are nearly perfect; the show was written and directed by Michael Leeds and choreographed, brilliantly, by Kathleen Marshall. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Tempest—The New York Shakespeare Festival's Central Park production, starring Patrick Stewart and directed by George C. Wolfe, has moved indoors. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

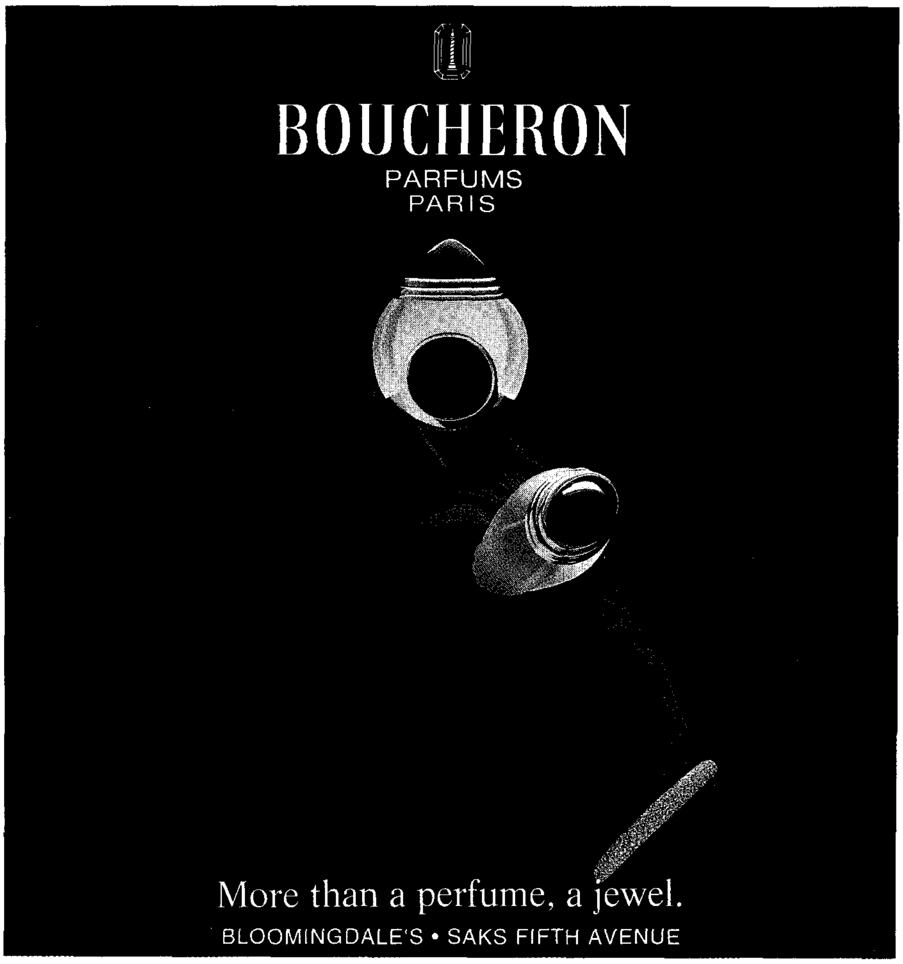
Victor/Victoria—Julie Andrews has returned to Broadway to star in a theatrical version of the 1982 movie. Written and directed by Blake Edwards. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Wake Up Call—Camryn Manheim takes center stage with her autobiographical solo comedy "Wake Up, I'm Fat!" in the Public's three-week festival of performance art, cabaret, and monologues. (425 Lafayette St. For more information, call 260-2400. Closes Nov. 26.)

Zombies from the Beyond—James Valcq's musical sendup of fifties science-fiction movies takes an irreverent look at America's naïve fascination with space exploration and all the Cold War paranoia that went with it. The many songs are funny ("Don't just deter 'em, massacre 'em!"), and the cast—particularly Claire Morkin, as the competent ingénue who has to save the world's men from the lascivious Zombettes, and Jeremy Czarniak, as a lovesick delivery boy whose earnest tap dancing helps rescue the planet—is cartoonish perfection. (Players, 115 Macdougal St. 254-5076.)

LONG RUNS

AFTER-PLAY: Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **DEATH DEFYING ACTS:** Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **HAVING OUR SAY:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE HEIRESS:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200. . . . **HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PARTY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **SWINGTIME CANTEEN:** Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SYLVIA:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200.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DANCE

Ballet Argentino—Julio Bocca, who is a danseur noble with the American Ballet Theatre, founded this troupe in his native country, where it plays to soccer stadiums that tend to be packed with teen-age girls who scream over the orchestra. In its New York début, at City Center, the fifteen-member company will perform "Pulsaciones," by Vittorio Biaggi; Marius Petipa's "Don Quixote Suite"; and "Tango," a series of six variations on the national dance. (131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Nov. 16-18 at 8 and Nov. 19 at 2.)

Limón Dance Company—The modern-dance repertory company revives four pieces by Doris Humphrey, including "Day on Earth" (1947), and presents works by Garth Fagan, Donald McKayle, Phyllis Lamhut, Daniel Nagrin, Ralph Lemon, and, of course, the company's founder, José Limón. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Nov. 15-17 and Nov. 21 at 8, Nov. 18 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 19 at 2 and 7:30. Through Nov. 26.)

Eiko & Koma—The wife-and-husband duo presents a tetralogy evoking the subtle changes in an autumn woodland, with "Husk," "Distant," "Tree," and "Echo." (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 752-3015. Nov. 16-18 at 8.)

"Cambio y Remate"—Choreographer Fred Darsow combines elements of flamenco and modern dance in four works, including "Tarantos," "More Fandangos," and the title piece. His collaborators are composer Manuel Rodrigues, guitarist Luís Heredia, and the flamenco singer La Repompa de Málaga. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8914. Nov. 16-19 at 8:30.)

Nēo Lăbos—The seven-member company performs two works by choreographer Michele Elliman, "A Note to Good Girls" and "Land Mind Scapes," in collaboration with John O'Malley. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 924-0077. Nov. 15-17 at 8, Nov. 18 at 3 and 8, and Nov. 19 at 3.)

"Ka-Tap"—Janaki Patrik, a disciple of the Kathak dancer Pandit Birju Maharaj of North India, joins tap artists Neil Applebaum and Olivia Rosenkrantz in dances to some rarely heard fusions—for example, tabla and scat, Duke Ellington and Sundhin Dasgupta. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Nov. 17 at 8.)

"Siiovlummia-Torrente N.3"—As part of "La Creatività ed il Genio," a festival commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the Italian futurist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the Vera Stasi company, under the direction of Silvana Barbarini, performs twenty-six works according to the principles outlined in Marinetti's "Manifesto of Dance," including "Olfactory Portrait of a Woman," "Death of the Moonlight," and "Futurist Statements in Dynamic and Synoptic Rhetoric." (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Nov. 18 at 8.)

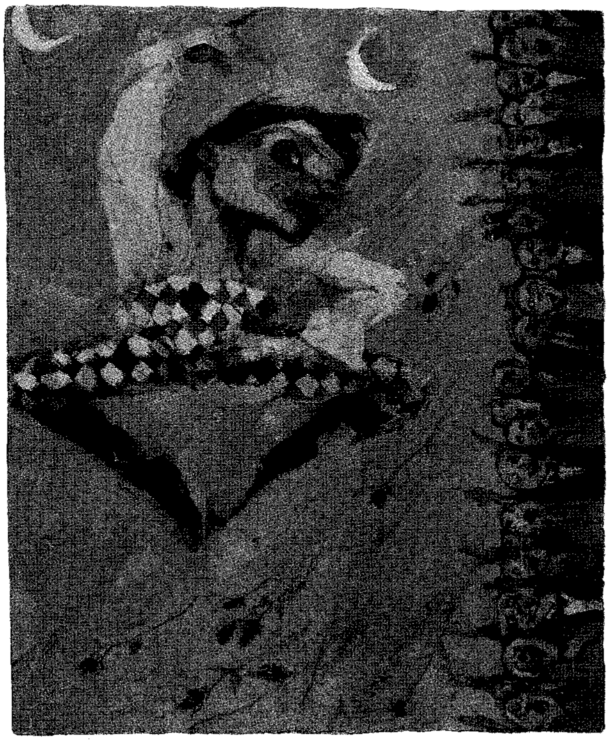
Central Ballet of China—The sixty-member company from Beijing performs choreography by Jiang Zuhui ("New Year's Sacrifice") and Rudolf Nureyev ("Don Quixote, Act III"), among others. (Lehman College Concert Hall, the Bronx. 1-718 960-8833. Nov. 19 at 7.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Joanne Brackeen—Tapping into the contemporary wellspring fed by Tyner, Hancock, and Evans, Brackeen has fashioned an engaging personal sound at the piano. Everything she touches, from American songbook standards and Brazilian melodies to her own modernist pieces, is stamped with jazz authority. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-2200. Nov. 15 at 12:30.)

Jethro Tull—Ian Anderson, the genteel salmon farmer who doubles as a bug-eyed, flute-wielding troll, has been mistakenly called Jethro Tull for years. That's a band, not a guy. Last year, Anderson parted with his old group and released "Divinities: Twelve Dances with God," a disk of music for flute and orchestra, which was not without a certain piquant dignity (especially for a man who used to parade about in leggings). Now he intends to return to the world of baroque rock—a genre that Tull has perfected since 1969. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Nov. 15 at 8.)



Julio Bocca, with Ballet Argentino, at City Center.

N. ASCENCIOS

David Crosby and Graham Nash—Hold the Stills, hold the Young. (Westbury Music Fair. 1-516 334-0800. Nov. 15 at 8.)

Mitzi Gaynor—The perky actress, singer, and dancer. (Westbury Music Fair. Nov. 16 at 8.)

Björk—The world's first Icelandic rock star, Björk Gudmundsdóttir, is a twenty-nine-year-old elfin-faced dynamo with a voice of such reckless passion that it sounds as if the midnight sun were the secret to eternal life. She's back to promote "Post," the second solo album she has made since leaving the Sugarcubes. These days, Björk is a citizen of the world: she lives in London, records in the Bahamas, collaborates with big-ticket artists like Madonna (she co-wrote the music to "Bedtime Story"), and, as she recently told *Rolling Stone*, feels the influence of "people like Gabriel García Marquez and all those lot." (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 247-0200. Nov. 17 at 8.)

Del McCoury—If you had to nominate one person as the official bluegrass preservationist of our generation, this former Bill Monroe vocalist would certainly get the nod. McCoury has always had a goodly amount of honky-tonk in him, too, which is probably what's kept his textbook high-lonesome sound so loose over the years. His well-oiled, lightning-fingered band ain't bad either. (St. Ann's Church, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn. 1-718 858-2424. Nov. 17 at 8.)

Iris DeMent—It's hard to tell what's more disarming—the rural twang of her gorgeous, unspoiled voice or the simple truths of her folk compositions. Both of her albums, "Infamous Angel" and "My Life," feature a slew of musical Americana that sounds so authentic you'd swear it must have existed decades before she was born. Imagine the original Carter family reincarnated as a lovely singer-songwriter. (St. Ann's Church. Nov. 18 at 8.)

Sonny Rollins—Fifty years after he burst onto the scene honking and snorting like Charlie Parker's rambunctious younger brother, Rollins still holds fast to all his titles: he's been called, among other things, the saxophone colossus, the titan of the tenor, and the master of improvisation. At his semiannual concert blowouts, he keeps his chops sharp by surrounding himself with competitive guest soloists, whom he proceeds to carve into pieces. For this gig, the great altoist Jackie McLean and the brassy Milesean trumpeter Wallace Roney will attempt to keep their heads above water, while bassist Percy Heath, the rock of the Modern Jazz Quartet, will provide the solid bottom. (Beacon Theatre. Nov. 18 at 8.)

Everclear—Above-average grunge. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. Nov. 18 at 8.)

Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Festival—Unbeknownst to Clint Eastwood, there have been cowboys in Hawaii since the early eighteen-hundreds. And, like their North American brothers, Hawaiian cowboys have their own brand of guitar playing: slack key, wherein the strings are tuned down to a low and moaning open chord that makes the instrument snap, buzz, and gurgle like a Jew's harp in an empty saloon. For this bizarre and potentially beautiful evening, the indefatigable World Music Institute has brought together half a dozen experts (most of whom appear on Dancing Cat Records' excellent "Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Masters"), along with the Ku'ulei Aloha dancers, a three-member hula troupe. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Nov. 18 at 8.)

Judy Mowatt / Sister Carol / Worl-a-Girl—Top-shelf female reggae stars. (Whitman Hall, Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, Brooklyn College. 1-718 951-4500. Nov. 18 at 8.)

Chicago—People laughing, people crying, a man selling ice cream. (Westbury Music Fair. Nov. 20 at 8.)

Goo Goo Dolls—A groovy rock-anthem band specializing in power chords and stadium-size hooks, this Buffalo-based combo brings to mind the Replacements—though they're more starry-eyed and youthfully driven. (And the Replacements never made a habit of performing barefoot.) They'll be playing material from their breakthrough album, "A Boy Named Goo." (Academy, 234 W. 43rd St. 307-7171. Nov. 21 at 7:30.)

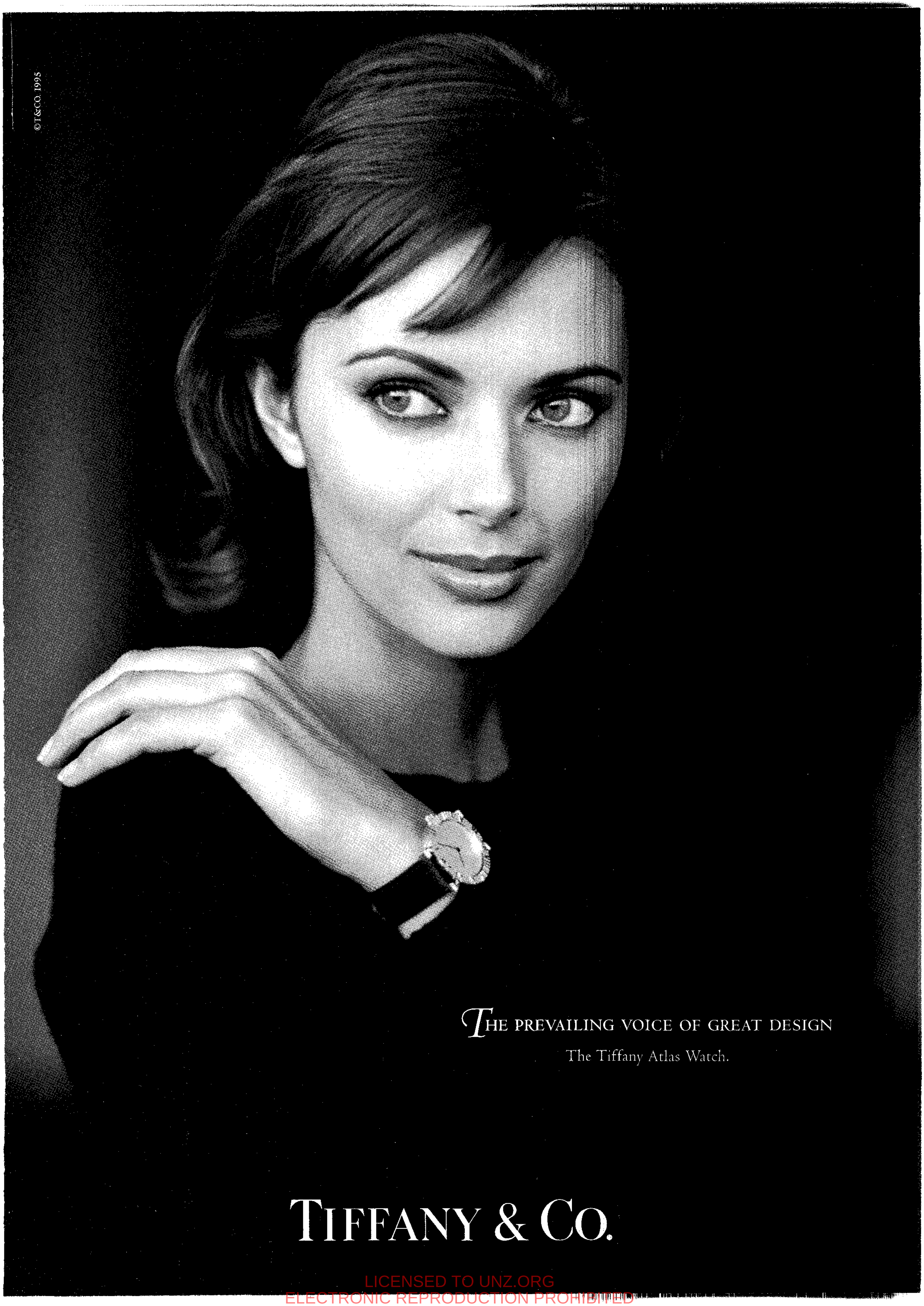
Anthony Davis—This pianist plays what might be best described as Anthony Davis music—a hybrid of jazz and classical which befits a musician who began his career as a cutting-edge jazzman and ended up composing opera. As a soloist, he combines a pristine touch with a spiky attack; his writing for ensembles is minimalist but lush in detail. For this show, he'll present a new work for piano and strings. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Nov. 21 at 8.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Blarney Star, 43 Murray St. (732-2873)—Home to fine Irish music every Friday night.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Nov. 16: **dan zanes,** formerly of the Del Fuegos, a wafer-thin rock and roller with a flair for dark, dreamy tunes in the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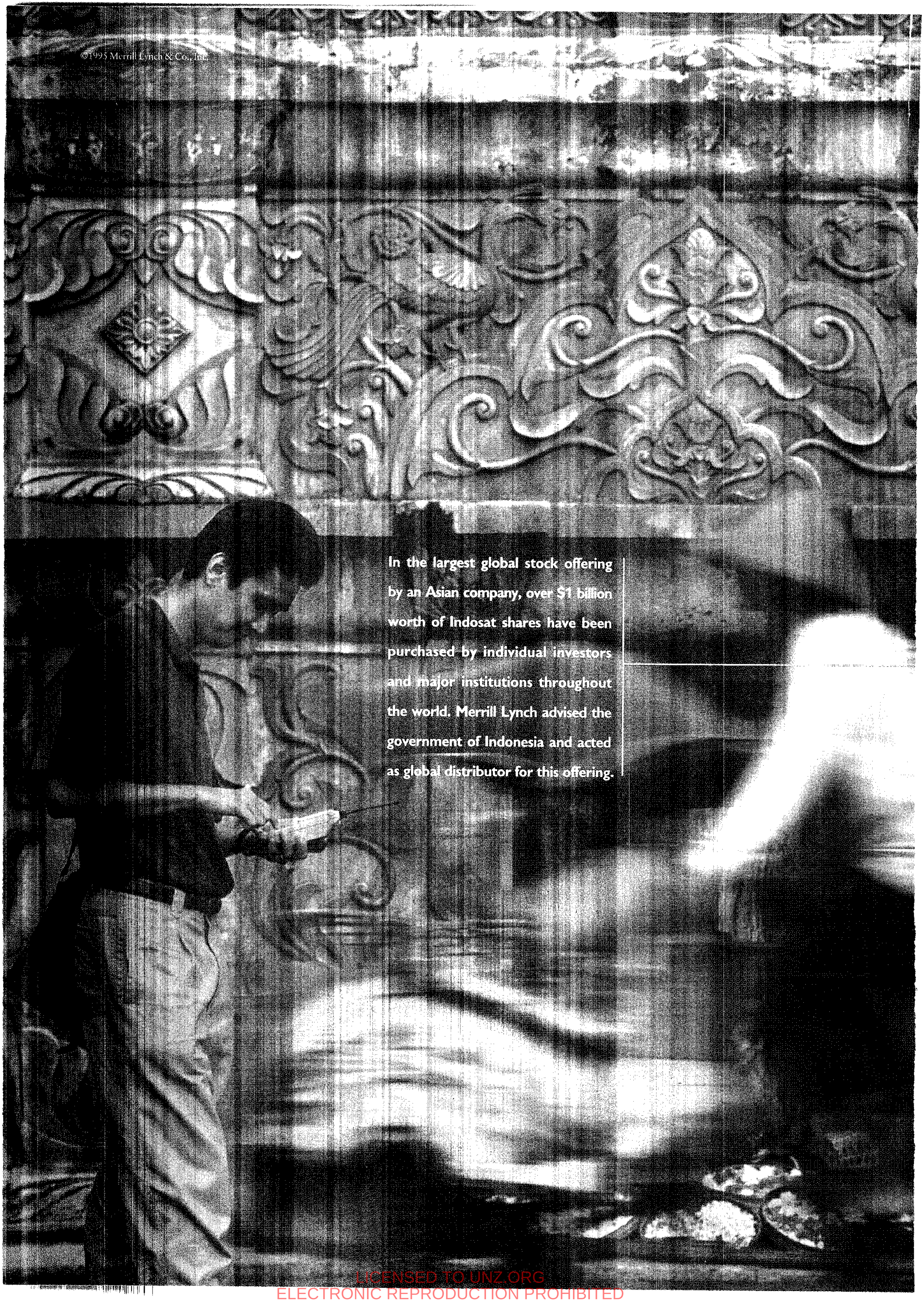

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manner of Chris Isaak. With **R. L. BURNSIDE.** Nov. 17: Guitarist **STANLEY JORDAN.**

BROWNIES, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Nov. 19: The **BOTTLEROCKETS.** This hirsute combo from Festus, Missouri, has scored major coolness points with its recent release, "The Brooklyn Side," produced by former Blackheart and Del Lord Eric Ambel. The LP offers ample proof that the band has mastered the Sturm und Twang of deep-fried rock and roll.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Nov. 17-18: The **KINSEY REPORT.** One of the better modern-blues combos, this funky family (their father is Big Daddy Kinsey, one of the original Mississippi Delta bluesmen) easily shuffles rock, R. & B., and reggae into their music.

FEZ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Actress, musician, comedienne, and performance artist **ANN MAGNUSON** finishes up a two-night stand on Nov. 15. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Nov. 15: **LISA LOEB.** Alternative rock's answer to Ally Sheedy has just released "Tails," her first full-length album (and a long overdue follow-up to "Stay," the phenomenally whiny hit that established the cute singer and her nerdy horn-rim glasses). The good news is that "Tails" is no more insufferable than, say, a marathon of "thirtysomething" reruns. Opening for Loeb will be the folk-pop outfit **ONCE BLUE,** whose front woman, Rebecca Martin, also has delicate-plant tendencies. Fortunately, she spices her acoustic ennui with zesty Everything But the Girl jazz shadings. On Nov. 18, the legendary **DR. JOHN** is in the house. Nov. 21: A Benefit for Bosnia, with former art rockers from Yes and Renaissance. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

LIMELIGHT, Sixth Ave. at 20th St. (807-7850)—A church turned eighties hot spot, this unholy venue currently plays host to a variety of techno and alternative acts. Speaking of alternative, the cross-dressing pioneer **BOY GEORGE** drops by on Nov. 17. Before RuPaul, before k. d. lang, there was George, the first gender-bending hero of the MTV generation. Sure, Bowie and Little Richard were camping it up back when George was still in his pram, but neither of them ever had a vehicle as outlandish as Culture Club. After a brief mid-eighties brush with heroin, George has become the comeback kid: his big break was the smash title track from "The Crying Game," and now he's the proud author of a wonderful autobiography called "Take It Like a Man."

MANNY'S CAR WASH, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—The Upper East Side blues. Nov. 16: Anson Funderberg and the Rockets.

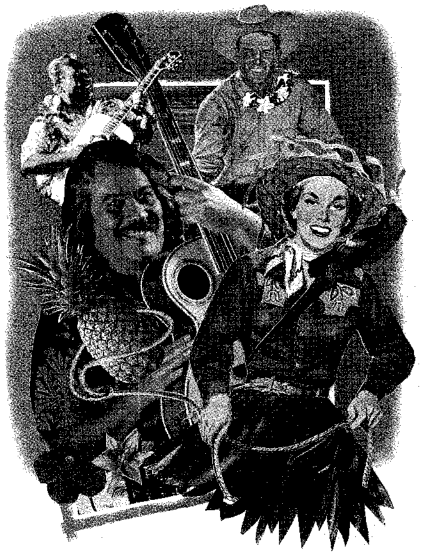
MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—Boston hunk oddity **JONATHAN RICHMAN** will preach to the converted Nov. 17-19. His songs, his stories, and his bare chest—should he deign to dispense with his shirt—are proud and fascinating assets, and no other rocker around can reap such enchantment from the mundane.

MERCURY LOUNGE, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Nov. 18-19: **BLACK GRAPE.**

LES POULETS, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and, now and then, a cha-cha. Dining.

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—A plush, old-fashioned night club, sixty-five floors above it all, complete with Art Deco fixtures, intimate glitter, and a panoramic view as dizzying as the tab. Taking her cues from gospel and swing, **RUTH BROWN** (here through mid-December) has a lithe, intuitive style of R. & B. singing. The definitive collection of her work is a 1989 anthology called "Miss Rhythm," and it's got the right name. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Bossa-nova legend **ASTRUD GILBERTO** continues through Nov. 16. Dining.



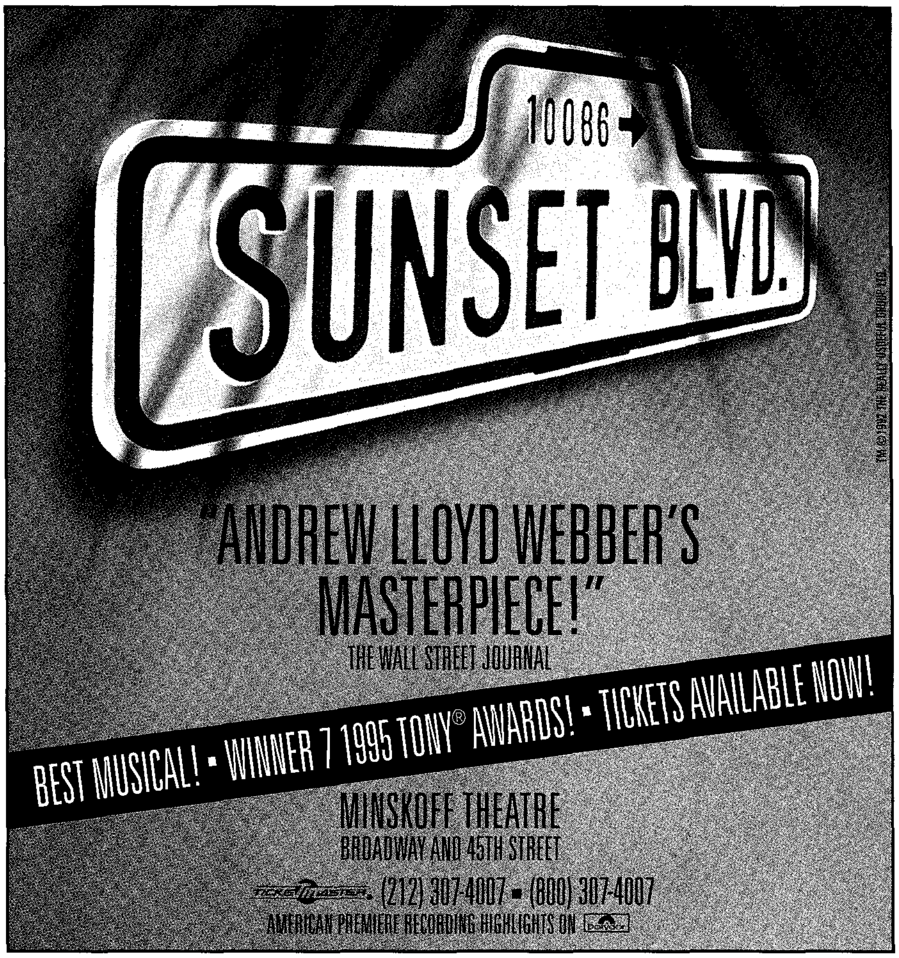
The Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Festival, at Symphony Space.

BOB HOLMES

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—**COMBUSTIBLE EDISON** is in the house on Nov. 16. The first band to feature a signature drink recipe on its CD cover (two ounces brandy, one ounce Campari, one ounce fresh lemon juice; ignite brandy, pour into a shaker full of cracked ice, etc.), the self-proclaimed "suave and sybaritic" group is the most convincing of the new cocktail-lounge sophisticates. The band's music is a kitschy libation consisting of equal parts vibraphone, Farfisa organ, melodica, bossa-nova bongos, surf guitar (played by a besuited James Bond type who calls himself the Millionaire), and torchy vocals, courtesy of Miss Lily Banquette. Nov. 17: **THE PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.** This Seattle shuffle-punk trio forgoes its hometown brand of mood-and-brood in favor of high-octane high jinks that inject a much-needed shot of humor into the Green Day formula. Their fine three-chord sendup, "We Are Not Going to Make It," is definitely at odds with the current buzz about the band. Enjoy it while it lasts, boys. With **SUPERNOVA.** Nov. 18-19: **YO LA TENGO.** This literate outfit, headed by the husband-and-wife team of singer Ira Kaplan and drummer Georgia Hubley, has a flair for crisp three-minute pop songs and for interminable feedback experiments. In between, they occasionally dip into blissful folk-rock, as heard on "Fakebook," a gorgeous 1990 collection of (mostly) covers. Concertgoers never really know which band they're in for. (**NOTE:** The Nov. 19 performance is a matinée.) Nov. 20: **BILLY BRAGG.** After Communism collapsed, the blue-collar bard from Barking, East London, switched from ideology to biology: his 1991 single, "Sexuality," was a paean to latex-coated lust. Fortunately, the globe continues to revolve, and Bragg remains the world's most entertaining socialist.

WEBSTER HALL, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Nov. 18: The **SKADANKS** whip this huge, environmentally friendly club into a frenzy.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JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist ANDREA MARCOVICCI is currently at work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room. Dining.

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—An airy two-tiered space with pastel walls and potted greenery. Nov. 17-18: Taylor's Wailers. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Nov. 19: the HERBIE HANCOCK trio. What with his hip-hop, funk, pop, and world-music endeavors, it's easy to forget that Hancock is also one of the most influential jazz pianists alive. In order to remind us, he's taking his steaming acoustic trio—which includes the extraordinary bassist Dave Holland and the bright young drummer Gene Jackson—out for a spin. DIANNE REEVES takes over on Nov. 21. Dining.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—On any given night, and well into the morning, one or another of New York's many formidable pianists can be found here. The trio of Peter Leitch, John Hicks, and David Williams continues through Nov. 18. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through New Year's Eve, the great BOBBY SHORT. Time has not diminished the tasteful virtuosity of Short's ivory-tinkling, nor has it taken the edge off his gregarious wit as a singer and showman. A fixture at the Carlyle, he can still spin an Ira Gershwin lyric with all the sophistication, humor, and pathos it deserves. Also well served are gems by Duke Ellington, Dorothy Fields, Irving Berlin, and, of course, Cole Porter. A de-lightful, de-lovely evening. . . .¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, BARBARA CARROLL is in attendance.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A cool, sumptuous piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel, with fine jazz seven nights a week. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Nov. 17: the KENNY GARRETT band and the TERENCE BLANCHARD quartet. Garrett's high-visibility slot in Miles Davis's late-eighties bands didn't reveal the half of what he can do with a horn. Schooled in two leading swing academies—the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra and Freddie Hubbard's band—he now soars in the modal-bop stratosphere. Time has added heft to his tone and intellect to his improvisation; his "Triology" was one of the smartest recordings this year. As Spike Lee's Bernard Hermann, Blanchard has turned in some vibrant and atmospheric scores (his latest is "Clockers"), but his capabilities as a soloist aren't in danger of being overlooked—he's the best of the neo-Marsalis trumpeters, a thrilling virtuoso with a romantic streak. The CARL ALLEN quintet begins a run on Nov. 21.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Nov. 15-18: Piano and guitar with Judy Carmichael and Chris Flory.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Nov. 15: MARTY EHRLICH and Dark Woods, BOBBY PREVITE and Weather Clear, and the WOLFGANG MUTHSPIEL group. Ehrlich's Dark Woods ensemble finds the nexus between chamber music and jazz improvisation; Previte's Weather Clear, the master drummer's mid-sized band, is invariably coiled and ready for action; guitarist Muthspiel is Germany's answer to John Scofield. An exceptional bill. Nov. 17: The TOM HARRELL quintet. Harrell's trumpet emits sonic warmth—a masterful quality reminiscent of Art Farmer and Clark Terry. Harrell spouts chiselled melody rather than rote licks; his solos leave the room with you. PAT MARTINO, the guitarist's guitarist (here on Nov. 18) has been admired by three generations of jazz fretmen (and Jerry Garcia). He knows how to transform knowledge, technique, and ideas into genuine music—a notion lost on most guitar manglers. A weeklong ANTHONY BRAXTON festival begins on Nov. 21 with a solo performance.

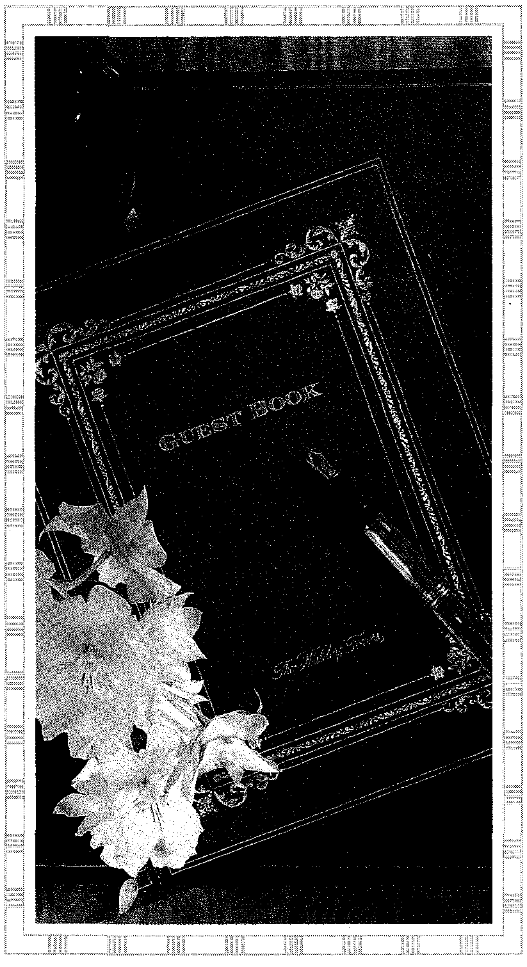
Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Nov. 19: the GREG OSBY NO'TET. The VICTOR LEWIS quintet begins a run on Nov. 21. Drummers don't come any sharper than Lewis: as subtle as he is incisive, with a rhythmic kick akin to a low-level hurricane, he plays his instrument as if it were a piano, extracting shades of color from all over his kit. He's also a canny composer and a more than capable bandleader. Dining.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—The ILLINOIS JACQUET big band is currently in the midst of a two-week run. Now in his seventies, the tenor saxophonist is a journeyman survivor whose career highpoints include his famous solo on Lionel Hampton's recording of "Flying Home"; his appearance in Gjon Mili's short film, "Jammin' the Blues"; and his screeching, stomping tenor battles in the fifties, as a member of Jazz at the Philharmonic. In 1983, he decided to put together a big band, and it has become a smooth, highly popular Basie-like combo, easy to dance to and most notable for its leader's sumptuous sound.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—MARK WHITFIELD is in charge through Nov. 19. A young guitarist with chops to spare and a bit too much desire to prove it, Whitfield has the funky fluidity of a pre-pop George Benson and a flair for gospel and blues. From Nov. 21: LOU DONALDSON with DR. LONNIE SMITH. The VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA holds sway on Mondays.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—Nov. 15-18: The CHICO FREEMAN quintet. Nov. 21: The JOHN CLARK quartet. Dining.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through Nov. 18: a trio featuring BUCKY PIZZARELLI, JAY LEONHART, and JOHN BUNCH. Dining.



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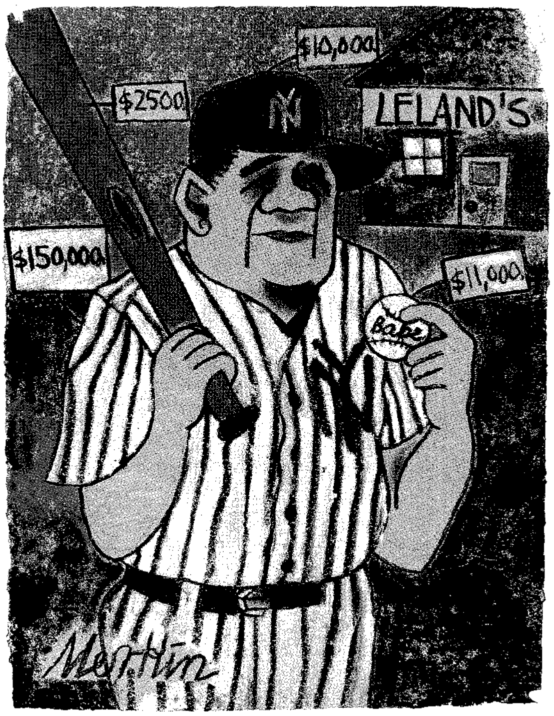
ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt." Through Jan. 7. . . . ¶ "Howard Hodgkin: Paintings 1975-1995," a survey of the British abstract colorist's career. Through Jan. 28. . . . ¶ "Goya in the Metropolitan Museum of Art." Through Dec. 31. . . . ¶ "John Singleton Copley in America," seventy-five portraits of affluent Bostonians and New Yorkers, done before the artist packed up for London in 1775. Through Jan. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Piet Mondrian: 1872-1944," a hundred and sixty paintings and drawings, and a re-creation of the artist's last studio, at 15 E. 59th St. Through Jan. 23. . . . ¶ "Alfred Stieglitz at Lake George," a large trove of photographs from the twenties and thirties, many never before exhibited, taken at Stieglitz's upstate retreat. Through Jan. 2. . . . ¶ Uta Barth, Joseph Bartscherer, Ulrich Görlich, and Eric Rondepierre have contributed new photographs and site-specific installations to "New Photography 11." Through Jan. 9. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)



A Leland's auction of sports memorabilia.

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Claes Oldenburg: An Anthology." "I'm for an art that is political-erotical-mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum," Oldenburg proclaimed in 1961. More than thirty years later, a large sampling of this Pop progenitor's sculptures sits comfortably on its duff at the Guggenheim, further evidence (as if any were needed) that yesterday's scruffy avant-garde becomes today's haute-bourgeois institution. That said, curator Germano Celant's selection goes a long way toward recalling the radicalism of Oldenburg's immensely influential performances, installations, and soft sculptures. Wisely emphasizing the artist's work through the early seventies, Celant soft-pedals the "humorous" large-scale public commissions that have been the heart of his activity since. The museum has also managed a coup: an enormous soft shuttlecock has been created especially for this exhibition; installed on one of the upper tiers, its white tendrils spill over the railing like the unruly hair of an abstract Medusa. Through Jan. 21. . . . ¶ "Joel-Peter Witkin," a mid-career retrospective of the photographer's astonishing and horrifying œuvre. Through Jan. 14. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—Shifting cultural paradigms, man. "Beat Culture and the New America: 1950-1965" chronicles the works, and cross-pollinations, of the poets, painters, musicians, photographers, and filmmakers who took their aesthetics from the street. Among the cats on view are Rivers, Corso, Ginsberg, Kaprow, Kerouac, Conner, DeFeo, and Berman. Through Feb. 4. . . . ¶ "Robert Frank: Moving Out," a large retrospective of the photographer's career. Starts Nov. 16. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"To the Ends of the Earth" includes fossils, field equipment, maps, and memorabilia from fifteen of the museum's fossil-hunting expeditions—from Medicine Bow, Wyoming, in 1901, to the current Gobi Desert digs. Through Dec. 10. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—"Worlds Seen and Imagined," an impeccably researched, sumptuously installed exhibition of Japanese screens on loan from the Idemitsu Museum of Arts, in Tokyo, spans the history of these gilded visions from the fifteenth through the early nineteenth century. Almost the entire surface of one dazzling seventeenth-century screen has been covered with gold leaf; spare red and white plum trees spin across it like haunted, sentient beings. Part one remains on view through Nov. 19; part two starts Nov. 22 and runs through Jan. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—The graphic expressiveness of the Chinese pictograph is examined in "Abstraction and Expression in Chinese Calligraphy." Through Dec. 21. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday evenings until 8; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Fashion Institute of Technology, Seventh Ave. at 27th St.—"Paris Modern: The Swedish Ballet 1920-25." The Ballets Suédois was an avant-garde hothouse nourished on the contributions of de Chirico, Picabia, Cocteau, Satie, Cole Porter, René Clair, and many others. The two hundred and fifty objects here—drawings, costume and set designs, stage models, photographs, and two full-size backdrops—admirably document the company's short, fiery history. Through Jan. 13. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8, and Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—"The Butterfly and the Bat: Whistler and Montesquiou." At the center of this show's universe is James McNeill Whistler's 1892 portrait "Arrangement in Black and Gold: Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac." Many items on loan—paintings, drawings, photographs, decorative art, and more—illuminate the complex relationship between the American expatriate artist and the French poet, critic, and topflight dandy. Through Jan. 28. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"Growing Up in New York: The Photography of Arthur Leipzig." Black-and-white pictures, from the forties through the sixties, of children's games, East River diving, sit-ins, opening night at the opera, and more. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

William Bailey—Large-scale oils and more intimate paintings and graphite drawings. Usually restricting himself to subdued colors and matte finishes, Bailey depicts bowls and other household objects on shelves or tables, a simple setup that allows for a wide range of variations. Through Dec. 2. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

Red Grooms—New "sculpto-pictoramas," the artist's term for his mixed-medium painted sculptures. Through Nov. 25. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Robert Moskowitz—Recent paintings. The twist in this veteran's brand of minimalism is that his central image is always something familiar and, usually, phallic: a skyscraper, a cane, a smokestack. Through Dec. 9. (Helman, 20 W. 57th St. . . . ¶ Recent drawings by Moskowitz are at Markey, 55 Vandam St., through Dec. 16.)

David Salle—"Tragedy, Comedy & Other New Paintings." Suburban-modernist décor, jaded sophisticates, butterflies, and snowflakes jostle one another busily in these large pictures. At once fastidious and disorderly, they are much livelier and funnier than the "Early Product Paintings" the artist showed here two years ago. Through Dec. 2. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.)

Philip Smith—Big oil-and-wax paintings on linen. Smith mixes graphic incisions, usually made with a screwdriver or some other metal tool, with abstract decorative elements—grids, stripes, and polka dots; a hermetic, personal symbolism, blending motifs from both Eastern and Western cultures, characterizes his iconography. Through Dec. 2. (McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Tony Smith (1912-80)—A rare show of works on paper in a variety of mediums, including graphite, watercolor, gouache, ink, and collage, by the late-blooming minimalist sculptor (he had been an architect by profession). Through Jan. 13. (Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.)

"Contacting Pablo Picasso"—A well-curated exhibition that explores one of the lesser-known frontiers of Picasso's influence: American printmaking. It began surprisingly early—an unmistakably Picassoid drypoint of a female figure, by Arthur Bowen Davies, dates from 1918. Through Nov. 18. (Spanish Institute, 684 Park Ave., at 68th St.)

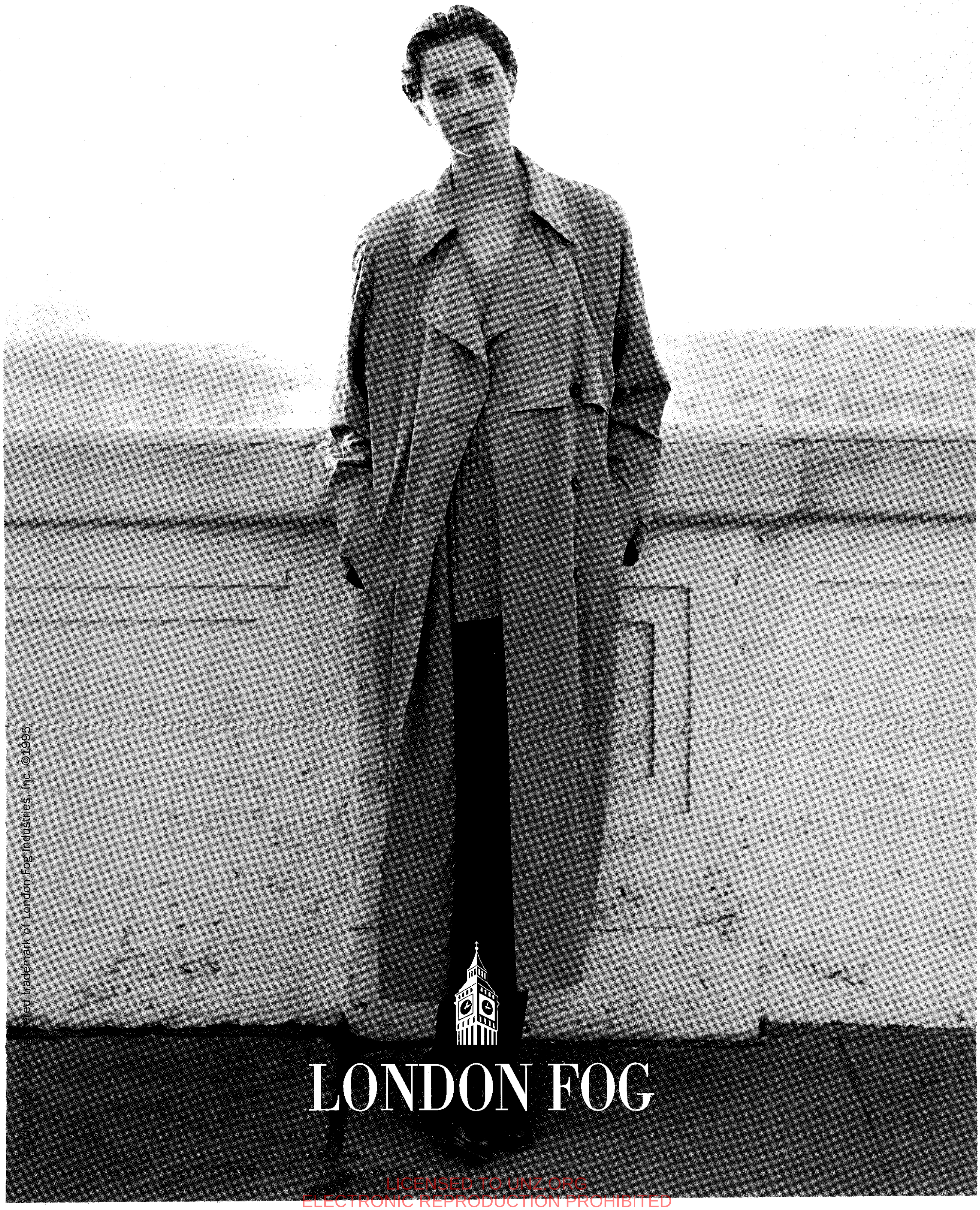
"Modern Masters from the Collection of Mark Goodson"—Goodson (1915-92), the well-known radio and television producer, acquired a small, fine collection of paintings and sculptures over twenty years: works by Kandinsky, Picasso, Arp, Dubuffet, Miró, Nevelson, Léger, and others. Through Nov. 25. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St.)

Short List—**PETER DE SÈVE,** James Cummins Bookseller, 699 Madison Ave., at 62nd St. Open Mondays; through Nov. 18. . . . **PETER HALLEY,** Janis, 110 W. 57th St. Through Dec. 9. . . . **ANA MERCEDES HOYOS,** Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St. Through Dec. 7. . . . **MEDRIE MAC PHEE,** Baldacci, 41 E. 57th St. Through Dec. 16. . . . **BEVERLY PEPPER,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. Through Dec. 2. . . . **PAUL RESIKA,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. Open Mondays; through Dec. 2. . . . **KENNY SCHARF,** Yoshii, 20 W. 57th St. Through Dec. 2. . . . **SAUL STEINBERG,** Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. Through Dec. 9. . . . **FRANK STELLA,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. Through Jan. 6. Also at Castelli, 420 West Broadway. Through Dec. 16. . . . **JUAN USLÉ,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Through Nov. 25.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Jim Anderson—"Bliss Jag," a show of videos and molded plastic sculptures that deploy the electric guitar as a polymorphous phallic symbol. Derived from much more original work by Matthew Barney and Jeff Koons, they are as glossy and sexy as commercial

RICHARD MERKIN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advertising, and as vacuous. Through Dec. 2. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St.)

John Currin—Oils by a programmatically naughty young painter; the leitmotiv is the large breasts of saccharine blond nymphs. Call it Fragonard for the "Beavis and Butt-head" set. Currin's misogyny is too relentlessly arch to be termed antifeminist, but just what he's getting at is rather hard to figure. Through Nov. 25. (Rosen, 130 Prince St.)

Al Hansen (1927-95)—More than fifty pieces, from the early sixties on, by the "happenings" pioneer and all-around enfant terrible, who died in June. Through Dec. 2. (Gracie Mansion Gallery, 54 St. Marks Pl. Open Thursdays through Saturdays, 2 to 6.)

Mike Kelley—"Toward a Utopian Arts Complex," a sometimes bewildering installation by the grunge Conceptualist; it includes re-creations of the artist's student paintings from 1974 to 1976 and a sprawling white model city composed of reconstructions (based on fractured recollections) of every school he attended, from Catholic grammar school through Cal Arts. Playing off the recent popular obsession with repressed memory, Kelley construes the whole of his art education as a form of institutionalized abuse (Hans Hofmann is cast as the chief abuser). The installation requires a lot of work; the reward is a jaundiced perspective that is as funny as it is self-serving. Through Nov. 25. (Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St.)

Richard Prince—Something different from the inspired subversive who in the past has appropriated magazine and advertising imagery (most famously the Marlboro Man) and given us paintings and drawings involving cartoons and one-liners. These new works feature dense brushwork, and the jokes have morphed into hand-painted lyrics. Through Dec. 22. (Gladstone, 99 Greene St.)

Gerhard Richter—A mini-retrospective of twenty-four photo-based paintings, from 1963 to 1987, by the German artist. Through Jan. 13. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St. . . . ¶ Richter's comprehensive "Atlas" is at Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

"Selections from 1989 to 1995" / Peter Greenaway—A farewell exhibition for the Klagsbrun gallery, which closes next month. Among the artists represented are Sally Apfelbaum, Shimon Attie, Maureen Gallace, Jimmie Durham, Wallace Berman, and Candida Höfer. / Works on paper and on canvas by the filmmaker. Both shows through Nov. 22. (51 Greene St.)

Short List—**francesco clemente,** Blum, 99 Wooster St. Through Jan. 27. . . . **bruce conner,** Marcus, 578 Broadway. Through Dec. 22. . . . **mary heilmann,** Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6; through Dec. 10. . . . **peter hutchinson,** Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. Through Dec. 9. . . . **alexander ku,** Merians, 76 Greene St. Through Dec. 2. . . . **guillermo kuitca,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. Through Dec. 22. . . . **julian lethbridge,** Cooper, 155 Wooster St. Through Nov. 25. . . . **brice marden,** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6; through Jan. 14. . . . **sean scully,** Boone, 417 West Broadway. Through Dec. 16.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's—Highlights of a contemporary-art auction on Nov. 15-16 include Gorky's "Scent of Apricots on the Fields" and David Smith's "Stainless Network." On Nov. 20, pre-Columbian art; on Nov. 21-22, a fine array of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Latin American art. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Christie's—Nov. 20: Modern Latin American art. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.) . . . ¶ At Christie's East, 219 E. 67th St.: furniture and accessories salvaged from great ocean liners (Nov. 15); collectibles relating to comic books and animation (Nov. 17-18).

Modernism—The annual show that focusses on decorative arts from 1870 to 1970. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. 777-5218. Nov. 16-19.)

Metropolitan Antiques—An antiquarian book fair. (110 W. 19th St. 463-0200. Nov. 17-19. Tickets at the door.)

Auction It and They Will Come—Leland's auction house presents all sorts of sports memorabilia, with a heavy emphasis on baseball's National and Negro Leagues. (Southgate Tower Hotel, Seventh Ave. at 31st St. Nov. 17-18. For more information, call 545-0800.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Merry Alpern—"Dirty Windows," a series of photos that the artist took from one window looking into another—the other being the bathroom window of an illegal financial-district sex club. Through Nov. 25. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St.)

Leonardo Barreto—Large, painterly, almost abstract color prints, in which the Nicaraguan photographer has captured unpopulated spots (or, rather, moments) in Tokyo where the contrast between natural and man-made geometries is quietly at play. Inventively displayed in unusual extra-wide frames of the artist's design, they have the stateliness of portraits and the numinousness of private mantras. A strong show from a welcome new Tribeca space. Through Nov. 18. (123 Watts Gallery, 123 Watts St.)

Ralston Crawford (1906-78)—Crawford was well known for his linear, near-abstract paintings of a narrow range of subjects: grain elevators, the Third Avenue El, lobster pots, and the seafaring life. He also took photographs throughout his career; vintage black-and-white images showing details of his usual subject matter are on display. Through Dec. 30. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St.)

Bruce Davidson—Sumptuous wide-angle black-and-white views of life and limbs in Central Park: lovers, loners, kids, birds, trees, and blizzards. Through Dec. 9. (Burden, 20 E. 23rd St.)

Len Jenshel and Diane Cook—Surreal and sublime volcanic landscapes, from Craters of the Moon National Monument, in Idaho, to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. Through Nov. 25. (Richardson, 560 Broadway.)

O. Winston Link—Black-and-white pictures of the last steam trains (along with depots and townsfolk) of the Norfolk and Western Railway, taken between 1955 and 1960. Through Dec. 16. (Mann, 42 E. 76th St. . . . ¶ Link's little-known color photographs of the same subjects are on view, for the first time, at Danziger, 130 Prince St., through Dec. 2.)

"Magic Moments"—Fifty well-known images by such photographers as Cartier-Bresson, Klein, Haas, Riefenstahl, Eisenstaedt, Mark, and others. Through Nov. 29. (Leica, 670 Broadway.)

Short List—**ansel adams,** Danziger, 130 Prince St. Through Dec. 2. . . . **david byrne,** Cristinerose, 395 West Broadway. Through Nov. 22. . . . **sarah charlesworth,** Gorney, 100 Greene St. Through Nov. 25. . . . **patrick demarchelier,** Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. Through Dec. 2. . . . **elliott erwitt,** Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. Through Jan. 6. . . . **el lissitzky,** Schickler, 52 E. 76th St. Through Jan. 13. . . . **esko männikkö,** Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6; through Dec. 6. . . . **herbert matter,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. Through Dec. 1. . . . **carlo mollino,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Through Nov. 25. . . . **john o'reilly,** Saul, 560 Broadway. Through Nov. 25. . . . **lorna simpson,** Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. Through Nov. 25. . . . **jerry n. uelsmann,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Through Dec. 9. . . . **william wegman** and **mark klett,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. Through Nov. 18.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum, and the Museum of the City of New York.)

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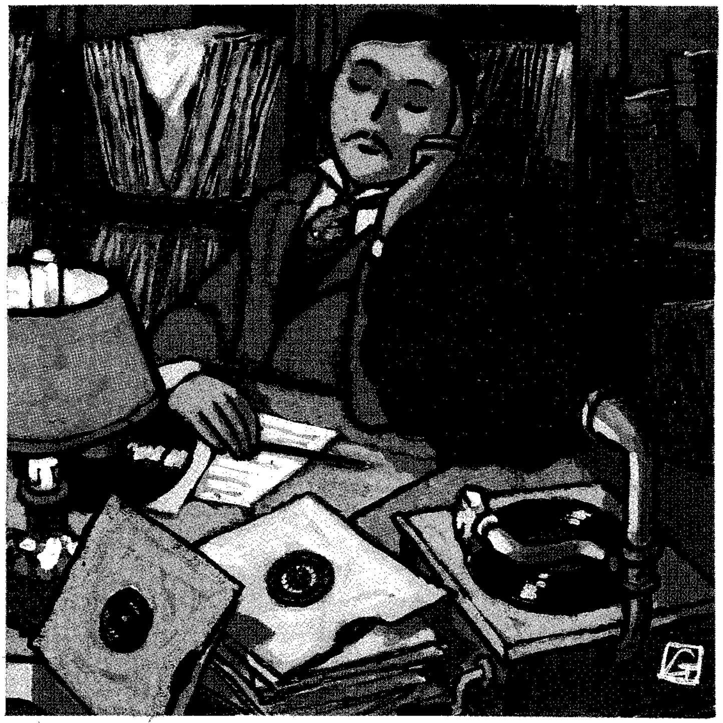


JEAN-CLAUDE GÖTTING

Da Camera of Houston performs Proust-related music, at Alice Tully Hall.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Memorable Music

MARCEL PROUST loved music. He consorted with musicians, he had a romance with the Venezuelan composer Reynaldo Hahn, and he littered "À la Recherche du Temps Perdu" with musical references. One of the novel's characters is the unhappy composer Vinteuil, whose violin sonata contains a "little phrase" that jogs people's memories and acts as a central motif. Though there's reason to believe that Proust had a specific piece of music in mind, his allusions are teasingly inconclusive. Several real-life sonatas have been suggested as the model for Vinteuil's, including ones by César Franck and Guillaume Lekeu. But the consensus is that Proust's inspiration was the First Violin Sonata of Gabriel Fauré, the prototype of the others; Fauré, as organist of the Madeleine (the church, not the pastry) and head of the Paris Conservatoire, was France's most august musical figure at the turn of the century.

On November 20, at the Walter Reade Theatre, Fauré's perfumed work, completed in 1876, will stand at the center of a program in which members of Da Camera of Houston will intersperse Proust-related music with readings from "À la Recherche" by the poet and translator Richard Howard. Curiously, the sonata will also resound at about the same time on the other side of Sixty-fifth Street, when it opens the second half of Itzhak Perlman's recital at Avery Fisher Hall. The Vinteuil sonata lingers on.

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050; for Carnegie Hall, 247-7800; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719.)

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA—**LA FILLE DU RÉGIMENT,** with June Anderson, Sarah Walker, Muriel Costa-Greenspon, Luciano Pavarotti, and Michel Trempont; conducted by Edoardo Müller. (Nov. 15 at 8 and Nov. 18 at 7:30; the latter is followed by the annual Opera Ball.) . . . **THE QUEEN OF SPADES,** by Tchaikovsky, with Karita Mattila, Birgitta Svendén, Leonie Rysanek, Ben Heppner, Peter Kazaras, Nikolai Putilin, and Dmitri Hvorostovsky; Valery Gergiev. (Nov. 16 at 8.) . . . **IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA,** with Jennifer Larmore, Ramon Vargas, Roberto Frontali, Claudio Desderi, and Robert Lloyd; Adam Fischer. (Nov. 17 and Nov. 20 at 8.) . . . **UN BALLO IN MASCHERA,** with Sharon Sweet, Heidi Grant Murphy, Dolora Zajick, Francisco Araiza, and Paolo Gavanelli; Mark Elder. (Nov. 18 at 1:30.) . . . With Stefka Evstatieva instead of Ms. Sweet. (Nov. 21 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA—Presenting the final performances of **CINDERELLA,** by Rodgers and Hammerstein. (Nov. 15-16 at 6:30; Nov. 17 at 8; Nov. 18 at 1:30 and 8; and Nov. 19 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

JUILLIARD OPERA CENTER—Presenting Prokofiev's "L'Amour des Trois Oranges," fully staged. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 769-7406. Nov. 15 and 17 at 8 and Nov. 19 at 2.)

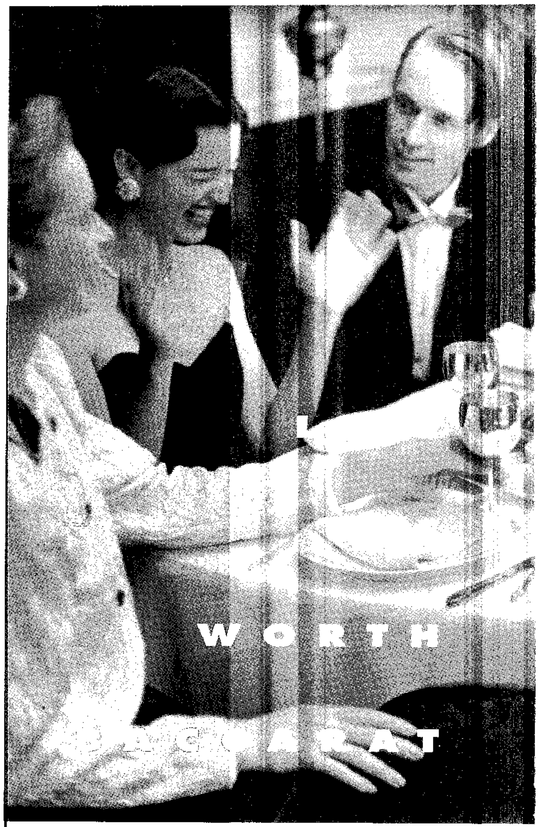
"PATIENCE & SARAH"—A concert reading of a new opera by Paula M. Kimper and Wende Persons. (American Opera Projects, 463 Broome St. 431-8102. Nov. 16-18 at 7:30.)

OPERAS FROM TEREZIN—Staged productions of Hans Krása's "Brundibar" and Viktor Ullman's "The Emperor of Atlantis," both of which were composed in the Terezin concentration camp. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 19 at 8. On Nov. 20 at 10 A.M., a presentation of "Brundibar" for children.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—Colin Davis conducts Haydn's Symphony No. 72, Sibelius's Violin Concerto (with Midori), and Dvořák's Symphony No. 8. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Nov. 15-18 at 8.)

"SACRED MUSIC IN A SACRED SPACE"—Kent Tritle directs the Choir and Orchestra of St. Ig-



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natius Loyola in Handel's F-Major Organ Concerto (featuring Nancianne Parella), Britten's "A.M.D.G." ("Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam"), and Haydn's "Paukenmesse." (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 288-2520. Nov. 15 at 8.)

Boston Symphony—Performing Mahler's Symphony No. 9, with Bernard Haitink conducting. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 15-16 at 8.)

Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra—Vassily Sinaisky leads Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 2 (with Barry Douglas), Shostakovich's music for the film "Hamlet" (Op. 116), and excerpts from Tchaikovsky's "Sleeping Beauty." (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 17 at 8.)

Orpheus Chamber Orchestra—The conductorless ensemble plays Bach's E-Major Keyboard Concerto and Stravinsky's "Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra" (both featuring Peter Serkin) as well as Beethoven's Symphony No. 2. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 18 at 8.)

Clarion Music Society—Presenting Cavalli's "Vespero della Beata Vergine" of 1656, with Newell Jenkins directing. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Nov. 20 at 8.)

RECITALS

Sequenzas—Luciano Berio, who turned seventy last month, first used the term "sequenza" in 1958, when he attached it to a virtuosic work for unaccompanied flute. Since then, he has composed twelve further sequenzas, each exploring tensions between performer and instrument. Most of Berio's sequenzas have entered the repertoire, forcing modern musicians to expand their techniques. (The sixth, for example, leads the violist to new heights of frenetic bowing; the fourth, for piano, makes unusual demands for pedal dexterity; the third, for voice, includes such instructions as "tense muttering" and "sing to me.") All thirteen sequenzas will be performed in this concert, enhanced by lighting and touches of staging. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Nov. 15 at 8.)

Sonic Boom Festival—Nov. 15 at 8: The New York New Music Ensemble plays works by Charles Wuorinen, Anthony Cornicello, C. Bryan Rulon, Michael Poast, and Arthur Kreiger. . . . ¶ Nov. 18 at 7:30: Continuum presents a large helping of twentieth-century American songs, as well as instrumental works by George Flynn, Osvaldo Golijov, Aaron Jay Kernis, Frederic Rzewski, and Francis Schwartz, all politically oriented. . . . ¶ Nov. 19 at 8: Newband brings its unusual instruments to bear on compositions by Harry Partch, Dean Drummond, and Julia Wolfe. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799.)

David Korevaar—Performing piano works by Fauré and Hindemith. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 15 at 8.)

Bargemusic—New York's floating concert hall returns from six weeks of dry-dock maintenance with a new hull and a clean bill of nautical health. In this concert, cellist Fred Sherry and pianist Pedja Mužijević perform Debussy's Cello Sonata, violinist Carmit Zori and Mr. Mužijević offer Beethoven's "Kreutzer" Sonata, and all three join for Mendelssohn's C-Minor Piano Trio. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Nov. 16 at 7:30 and Nov. 19 at 4.)

Three Quartets—All on Nov. 16 at 8, all playing twentieth-century repertoire. At Alice Tully Hall: The Arditti String Quartet offers the New York première of Carter's Quartet No. 5, as well as quartets by Pascal Dusapin (his Third), Takemitsu ("Landscape 1"), and Britten (his Third). . . . ¶ At the Miller Theatre: the Parisii String Quartet, in an all-Webern concert. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799.) . . . ¶ At the Carey Playhouse, Brooklyn Academy of Music: the Kronos String Quartet plays music by Steve Reich, Julia Wolfe, and Harry Partch. (30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 1-718 636-4100.)

Beethoven Alert—Nov. 18: At 4:30, a panel discussion about Beethoven and Vienna, his adopted city. . . . At 7: The B-Flat-Major String Quartet (Op. 130, with the "Grosse Fuge" attached) and the E-Flat-Major Septet (Op. 20). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949.) . . . ¶ Nov. 18 at 8: The violinist Pamela Frank and her father, the pianist Claude Frank, perform the Violin Sonatas No. 2, No. 7, and No. 10. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.) . . . ¶ Nov. 21 at 7: In the first public event of the newly formed New York chapter of the American Beethoven Society, the distinguished pianist Jacob Lateiner plays and discusses the composer's first and last piano sonatas. (Lang Recital Hall, North Building, Hunter College, 69th St. between Lexington and Park Aves. For information about tickets, and about the American Beethoven Society, call 772-5020.)

Mitsuko Uchida—Performing Schubert's Piano Sonatas in B Major (D. 575) and B-Flat Major (D. 960), as well as Schoenberg's Suite (Op. 25) and Klavierstücke (Op. 33a and Op. 33b). (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 19 at 2.)

Ensemble L'Astrée—The Italian period-instrument sextet offers eighteenth-century chamber works by composers both famous (Telemann, François Couperin, J. C. Bach) and not (Giovanni Lorenzo Somis, Gaetano Pugnani, Felice Giardini). (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Nov. 19 at 5.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—The Orion String Quartet plays Mendelssohn's E-Minor Quartet (Op. 44, No. 2), the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio offers Brahms's B-Major Piano Trio, and members of both ensembles team up for Schumann's Piano Quintet. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 19 at 5 and Nov. 21 at 7:30.)

Artur Papazian—Pianist, playing Chopin and Liszt. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 19 at 8.)

Da Camera of Houston—The chamber ensemble explores the musical world of Marcel Proust through performances of songs by Hahn, Fauré, and Debussy; Franck's D-Minor String Quartet; and Fauré's Violin Sonata No. 1. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. Nov. 20 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

Itzhak Perlman—Playing violin sonatas by Leclair, Bartók (his First), and Fauré (his First), as well as Bruce Adolphe's "Delicacies" (from "The Bitter, Sour, Salt Suite"); with pianist Samuel Sanders. (Avery Fisher Hall. Nov. 20 at 7:30.)

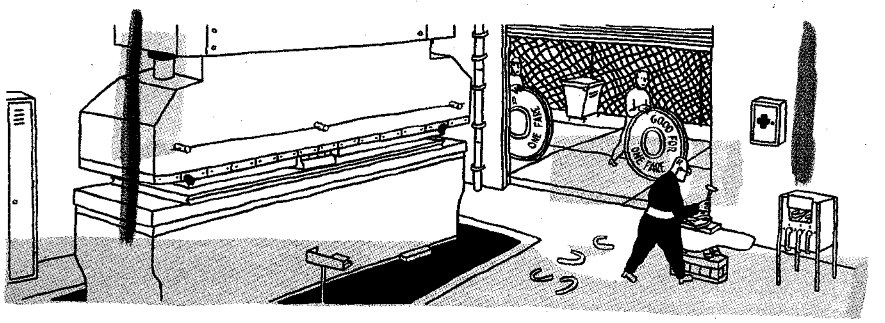
Ensemble Clément Janequin—The French vocal sextet, directed by countertenor Dominique Visse, performs French Renaissance secular music. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. Nov. 20 at 8.)

Parnassus—Offering twentieth-century works, by Thomas Adès, Jeff Nichols, Donald Martino, Charles Wuorinen, and Debussy. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 21 at 8.)

"Centro Tempo Reale"—"Real-time" electronics contribute to works by Luigi Nono and Pierre Boulez, while old-fashioned magnetic tape plays a part in Bruno Maderna's "Musica su Due Dimensioni" and Luciano Berio's "Thema, Omaggio a Joyce" (an electronic manipulation of a reading, in three languages, of a passage from "Ulysses"). (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Nov. 21 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Kicking It Live—Between tours with his hardcore band, Henry Rollins pares his act down to a solo spoken-word gig; one hits the Beacon this Thursday. "It's just me, my backpack, and a microphone," he said during a recent recording break. "I walk into a theatre, sound check is seven minutes, catering's for one, they give me some white light here. Security? What security?" When he started his spoken-word tours a decade ago, Rollins would read a prepared text; now the pumped-up poet just stands in a spotlight and speaks. "People would say, 'Yeah, the reading is nice, but it's really cool when you just talk to us.' I think there's a profound lack of that these days, with so much E-mailing and pay-per-view. There's hardly anyone just standing up there talking with a clear, human tone." (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Nov. 16 at 8.)



The Transit Museum's iron-shop tour, in the Bronx.

LAURENT CILLUFFO

Chop Shop—At the Tiffany Street Iron Shop, in the Hunt's Point section of the Bronx, they do not make lamps for your bedstand or reading nook. They stamp iron—and shred it, shear it, melt it, bend it, and shape it into subway shapes: roof beams and wheel trucks for the cars, gates and bracers for the tunnels, columns for the El. During the New York Transit Museum's tour of the Tiffany Street grounds this Saturday, shop superintendents will operate their heavy machinery, demonstrate the way new sections of track are fitted and secured, and open the earth to reveal the subterranean area where transit workers learn to sort through Con Ed lines, water mains, and steam and sewer pipes in order to safely reach the tunnels. (Nov. 18 at 10 A.M. For reservations, call the Transit Museum at 1-718 243-8601.)

Readings—Nov. 15 at 8: Poets (Ginsberg, Creeley, Bly, and others) and singers (Pete Seeger, Rebecca Moore) supply new verses to "Amazing Grace." (Poetry Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door on the night of the performance.) . . . ¶ Nov. 16 at 8: Richard Rayner reads from his memoir of youthful kleptomania, "The Blue Suit." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Nov. 19 at 2: Actresses Irene Worth and Marisa Tomei and novelist Francine Prose read from the diaries of the novelist Dawn Powell (1897-1965). (Atlantic Theatre, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

Talks—Nov. 17 at 8: Colorado State University professor of animal sciences Temple Grandin, the author of "Thinking in Pictures" and the subject of Oliver Sacks's essay "An Anthropologist on Mars," talks about living with autism. (Barnes & Noble, 33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Nov. 19 at 11: Ralph Freedman talks about the life of Rainer Maria Rilke, at the Biographers & Brunch series. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

Tour—Nov. 18 at 11 A.M.: Culinary anthropologist Annie Hauck-Lawson pops into the Polish butcher shops, bakeries, and markets of Greenpoint, Brooklyn. For more information, call the Brooklyn Historical Society at 1-718 624-0890.

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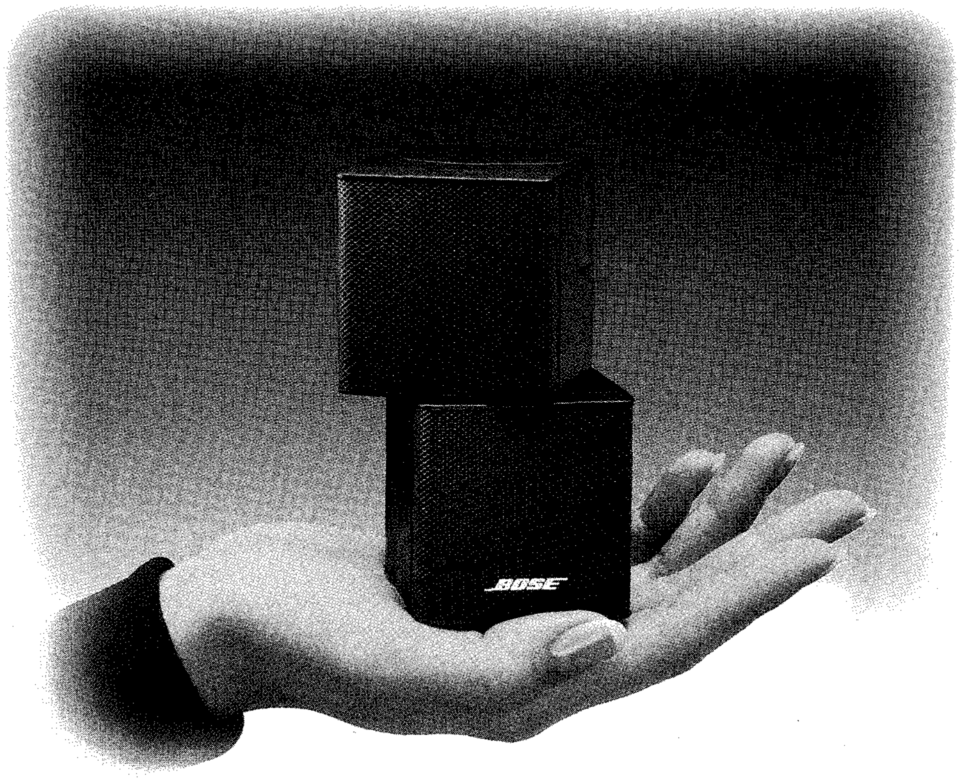

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THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

The American President—Michael Douglas is the Chief Executive, Annette Bening the woman he falls in love with, in a romantic comedy directed by Rob Reiner. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) Opening November 17. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th St. East, Coronet, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

The Babysitter—Before Alicia Silverstone starred in "Clueless," she took the lead in this drama about a suburban teen-ager hired to watch over three children. Written and directed by Guy Ferland, who based his screenplay on a Robert Coover short story. Opening November 15. (Film Forum.)

The Crossing Guard—Jack Nicholson plays an alcoholic jeweler, Anjelica Huston his estranged wife, and David Morse the drunk driver who accidentally killed their daughter, in a drama written and directed by Sean Penn. Opening November 15. (Angelika Film Center, Gotham Cinema, and 86th Street East Twin.)

Eclipse—Writer-director Jeremy Podeswa's début film follows the sexual adventures of ten Toronto residents on the eve of a solar eclipse. Opening November 17. (Quad Cinema.)

GoldenEye—James Bond returns, in the form of Pierce Brosnan, to battle double agents and keep the world safe from hijacked military satellites. Directed by Martin Campbell. Written by Michael France and Jeffrey Caine. Opening November 17. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

It Takes Two—A social worker (Kirstie Alley) in charge of a nine-year-old orphan and a wealthy widower (Steve Guttenberg) with a nine-year-old daughter fall in love through the scheming of the two girls (played by Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen), in a romantic comedy written by Deborah Dean Davis and directed by Andy Tennant. Opening November 17. (Village East Cinemas, New York Twin, East 85th Street, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Reckless—Craig Lucas has written this film adaptation of his 1988 black comedy, in which a housewife (Mia Farrow) embarks on a journey of self-discovery after her husband (Tony Goldwyn) hires a hit man to murder her. With Scott Glenn, Mary-Louise Parker, Eileen Brennan, Giancarlo Esposito, and Stephen Dorff. Directed by Norman René. Opening November 17. (Village East Cinemas and Lincoln Square.)

Rhythm Thief—Jason Andrews plays a Lower East Side rock-and-roll bootlegger, in an independent drama directed by Matthew Harrison, from a script by the director and Christopher Grimm. Opening November 15. (Film Forum.)

When Night Is Falling—Writer-director Patricia Rozema's drama centers on a college professor (Pascale Bussières) forced to choose between her boyfriend (Henry Czerny) and the circus performer (Rachael Crawford) she has fallen in love with. Opening November 17. (Angelika Film Center.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 32.)

Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls—Jim Carrey reprises his role as the Miami pet detective—this time on assignment in Africa—in a comedy written and directed by Steve Oedekerk. (Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, Gemini, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

Blue in the Face—Wayne Wang and Paul Auster's loosely organized sketchbook of neighborhood life in Brooklyn—a collection of doodles in the margins of "Smoke" (which Auster wrote and Wang directed). One of the earlier film's stars, Harvey Keitel, and several of its supporting actors play improvised skits with a bunch of celebrity drop-ins, among them Michael J. Fox, Lily Tomlin, Jim Jarmusch, Roseanne, and Madonna. The pointlessness would be vastly more appealing if Wang and Auster didn't make such a point of it.—T.R. (10/23/95) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Carrington—A drama about the relationship between the painter Dora Carrington (Emma Thompson) and the writer Lytton Strachey (Jonathan Pryce) in England following the First World War. With Steven Waddington, Rufus Sewell, Samuel West, and Penelope Wilton. Written and directed by Christopher Hampton, from Michael Holroyd's 1968 biography of Strachey. (Paris.)

Copycat—Movies about serial killers are now reaching epidemic proportions, and this latest contribution to the genre, directed by Jon Amiel, is one of the least convincing. Sigourney Weaver stars as a San Francisco serial-murder buff (great job); she is first seen lecturing on famous killers, is then attacked by a particularly nasty specimen (Harry Connick, Jr., plus pimples), and spends most of the rest of the picture hiding at home. From there she helps a local cop (Holly Hunter) in the search for *another* murderer, whose idea of fun is to copy famous slayings of the past. The plot would seem more ingenious if the movie itself didn't copy so many other thrillers (notably "The Silence of the Lambs"), and if it weren't so easy to spot every twist half an hour in advance.—A.L. (11/13/95) (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

Devil in a Blue Dress—Denzel Washington plays Easy Rawlins, the hero of Walter Mosley's popular detective novels. The action takes place in 1948; Easy, an unemployed veteran, reluctantly agrees to help a shady-looking white man (Tom Sizemore) locate a woman who may be lying low in one of L.A.'s black neighborhoods. The movie, written and directed by Carl Franklin ("One False Move"), is the most enjoyable private-eye film in a long time: a modest, skillful, unfussy genre piece that tells an exciting story and lets its more serious concerns remain just below the surface. Also with Jennifer Beals and Don Cheadle (who does a virtuoso comic turn as Easy's homicidal sidekick, Mouse).—T.R. (10/2/95) (19th Street East 6 and Waverly.)

The Doom Generation—Gregg Araki's aimless road movie is chicly anarchic—and a bore. The grunged-down teen-age characters (named Xavier Red, Jordan White, and Amy Blue) are pretty, and they talk like foulmouthed Lolitas, but only when they leave the violent roadway for a motel bed does the film develop any snap. Araki has made a punk-rock movie, all dirty fingernails and spit, but it's no fun—he's forgotten the mosh pit.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center.)

Fair Game—Cindy Crawford's screen début (she plays a lawyer on the run—God knows why—from former K.G.B. agents) is a true disaster from start to finish. She has the impressive physical qualities that James

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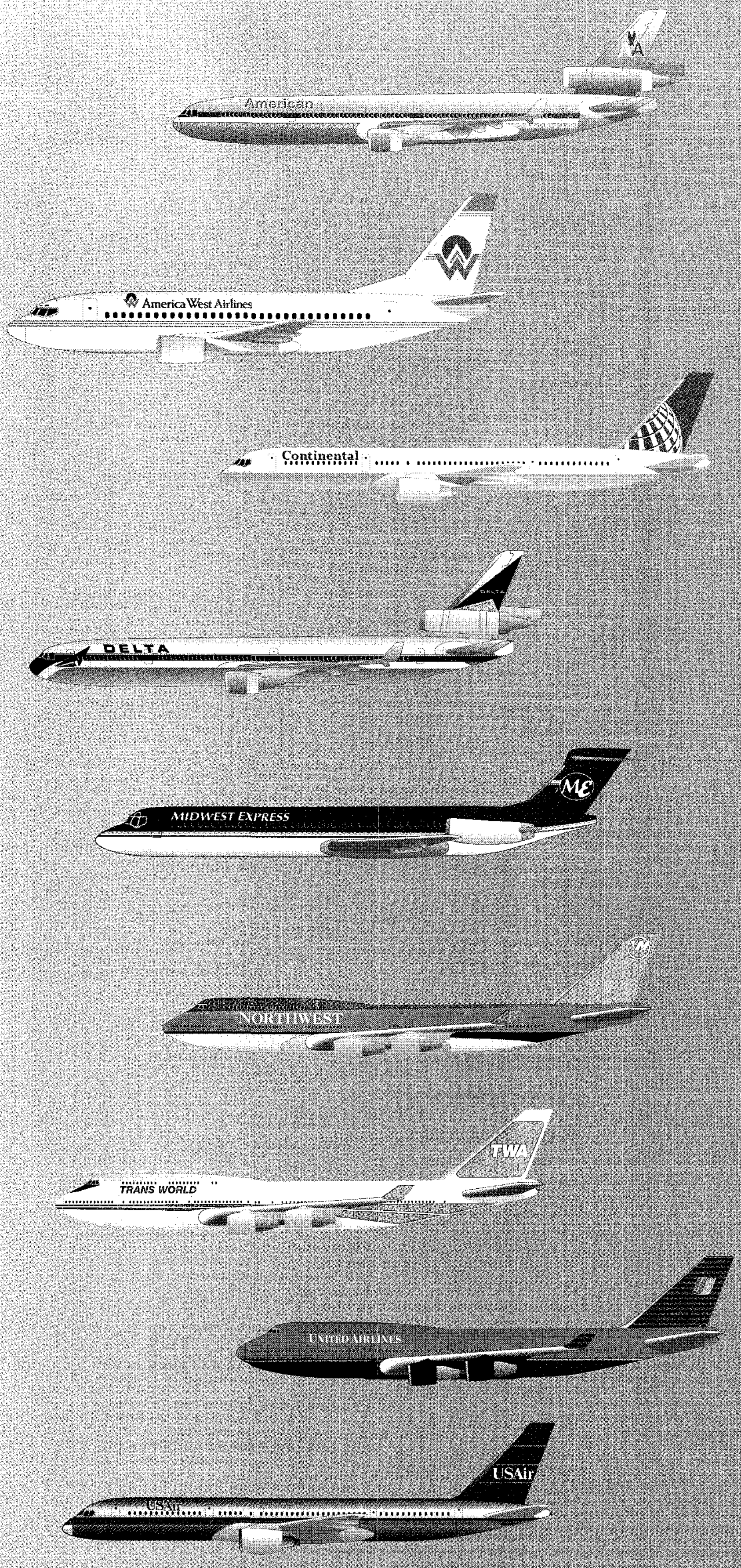
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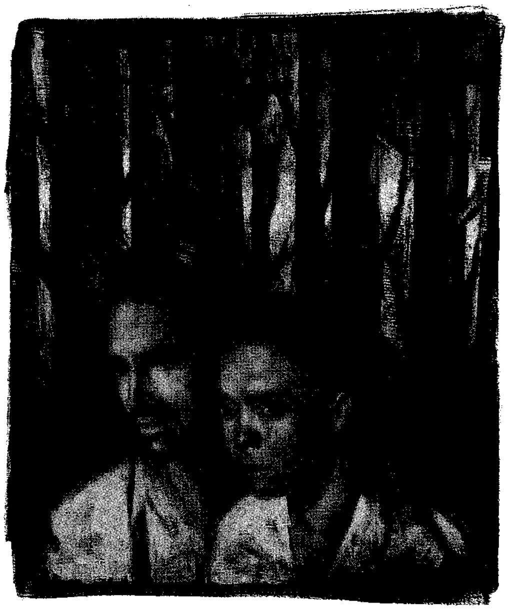
Cameron finds so attractive in his action heroines, but her voice, like Keanu Reeves's, is inflectionless. It doesn't matter much, anyway—the abominable screenplay is filled with zingers on the order of "My job is like the toilet: it ain't over till the paperwork's done." Not all the bad acting is Crawford's (who, at least, is game); William Baldwin and Steven Berkoff do their share, too. Directed, with tremendous explosions, by Andrew Sipes.—B.D. (Village East Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and National Twin. . . . ¶ 34th St. East; through Nov. 16.)

Get Shorty—John Travolta plays Chili Palmer, a small-time Miami loan shark who winds up in Hollywood, where he discovers his true métier and fulfills his destiny: he becomes a movie producer. Scott Frank's screenplay is based on an Elmore Leonard novel. The director, Barry Sonnenfeld, doesn't have the dexterity to trap the story's tiny, quick ironies; he works too strenuously for laughs. But Travolta's no-sweat acting—which deftly captures the dry comic tone of Leonard's prose—keeps the movie watchable. Also with Rene Russo, Gene Hackman, Danny DeVito, Delroy Lindo, and Dennis Farina.—T.R. (10/23/95) (Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, Baronet, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Coronet; through Nov. 16.)



Jason Patric and Thandie Newton in "The Journey of August King."

TIM BOWER

Gold Diggers: The Secret of Bear Mountain—In which two thirteen-year-old girls (Christina Ricci and Anna Chlumsky) go looking for gold near their small Pacific Northwest town. Directed by Kevin James Dobson. Written by Barry Glasser. (59th Street East Cinema, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, and 62nd & Broadway.)

Home for the Holidays—An ensemble piece for Thanksgiving, directed by Jodie Foster. Most of it takes place in Baltimore, where members of a semi-ordinary American family gather to eat and bond and generally make life a complete screaming hell for one another. The parents (Charles Durning and Anne Bancroft) are sliding sadly toward old age; the wacko aunt (Geraldine Chaplin) is already there; the son (Robert Downey, Jr.) is married to a man; one daughter (Cynthia Stevenson) is married to a jerk; and the other (Holly Hunter) isn't married to anyone and has a lousy cold. Foster connects with her cast (with the funny and fearless Hunter most of all), but the tone staggers wildly, as if the camera had got at the eggnog, and long before the end any inquiring edge has dulled into softness. It's an aw-shucks picture: people are impossible, it says, but hey, we love them anyway.—A.L. (11/13/95) (19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Tower East, Orpheum VII, Waverly, Guild, and Lincoln Square.)

How to Make an American Quilt—Winona Ryder plays Finn, a graduate student who spends the summer at the home of her grandmother (Ellen Burstyn) and her great-aunt (Anne Bancroft), interviewing members of a quilting circle for her thesis and deciding whether to marry her down-to-earth boyfriend. The characters represent possible paths of womanhood: there's a lonely widow (Kate Nelligan), a thwarted housewife (Lois Smith), a free spirit (Alfre Woodard)—everything but a lesbian. Saying that Ryder was born to play the self-conscious, narcissistic Finn is not exactly praise. Directed by Jocelyn Moorhouse ("Proof").—S.K. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, and 23rd St. West Triplex.)

The Journey of August King—In 1815, a young widower (Jason Patric) helps a runaway slave (Thandie Newton) escape through the mountains of North Carolina, in a drama directed by John Duigan. Adapted by John Ehle from his 1971 novel. (68th St. Playhouse.)

Kicking and Screaming—Noah Baumbach's first movie focusses on the indecisive, enervated months that four college buddies spend together after graduation, before they go their separate ways. What finally makes them move on, and sets this film apart from other slacker comedies, is the women they're attracted to: risk-taking students who are more capable than their men of standing on their own. Baumbach doesn't write grand speeches; he lets details and repartee carry the movie's emotional weight. The picture has a lovely, understated autobiographical lilt. The perfect ensemble cast includes Josh Hamilton, Olivia d'Abo, Parker Posey, and the reigning king of independent-film ennui, Eric Stoltz.—B.D. (Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

The Kingdom—A four-and-a-half-hour drama (originally made for Danish television) about the strange staff of a haunted hospital in Copenhagen. Directed by Lars von Trier, who co-wrote the screenplay with Niels Vørsel. In Danish and Swedish. (Angelika 57.)

Leaving Las Vegas—In Mike Figgis's startlingly beautiful new movie, Nicolas Cage gives a great performance as a failed writer who is consciously drinking himself to death. Cage captures the character's fearsomely undirected vitality—the muddled will that gives this drunk both the strength to die and the perverse ability to enjoy what's killing him. Figgis tells the story as a series of vivid, intense moments: snapshots of a man for whom neither the past nor the future has any meaning. The sole trace of conventional drama is the hero's affair with a kindhearted young hooker (superbly played by Elisabeth Shue). But the possibility that love will rescue him from his fate vanishes quickly, like a mirage. Although the movie is terribly, crushingly sad, its honesty is invigorating: it names its poison and downs it, neat. Also with Julian Sands. Figgis's screenplay is based on a 1990 novel by John O'Brien, who committed suicide last year at the age of thirty-three.—T.R. (11/6/95) (Village Theatre VII, Beekman, and Lincoln Square.)

Mighty Aphrodite—Woody Allen stars in his latest picture as Lenny, a New York sportswriter bored by his wife (Helena Bonham Carter) and attracted to a hooker (Mira Sorvino) who happens to be the mother—though she doesn't know it—of his adopted son. The movie treads enjoyably over old ground, though rather than cruising along with the ease of Allen's best work it tends to hobble, and it closes in a flurry of undecided endings. Sorvino's comic momentum rescues it. She offers the alarming prospect of sexual

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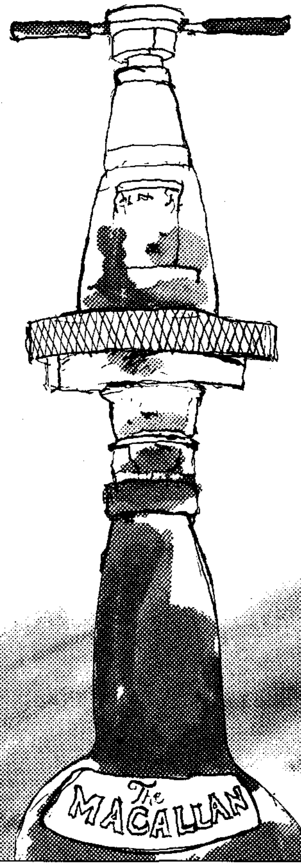

comedy without neurosis; you don't see *that* too often in a Woody Allen film.—A.L. (10/30/95) (19th Street East 6, Cinema I, Cinema II, Art Greenwich Twin, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Les Misérables—Jean-Paul Belmondo, looking like a wise, weather-beaten walrus, plays an illiterate ex-boxer who befriends an intellectual Jewish family fleeing the Nazis. They read him Victor Hugo; he identifies with the stoic reformed hero Jean Valjean and begins to carry out good works in his own life. Claude Lelouch's adaptation of the 1862 novel plays fast and loose with its setting and social context but preserves the melodrama and the conviction (so old-fashioned as to seem almost revolutionary) that some people are good and others just plain evil. A righteous, passionate, and witty soap opera. In French.—S.K. (Sutton.)

A Month by the Lake—The era is the nineteen-thirties. Vanessa Redgrave is amazing as Miss Bentley, a spinster photographer who has travelled to Lake Como to find love; the actress avoids all the repressed-schoolmarm clichés of the role and plays it as a loud, slightly infantile tomboy. Edward Fox is equally touching, and eccentric, as a lonely major. Trevor Bentham wrote the oddly suspenseful script, based on a novella by H. E. Bates; John Irvin directed.—S.K. (Village East Cinemas and Plaza.)

Nobody Loves Me—Writer-director Doris Dörrie's romantic comedy concerns a lonely twenty-nine-year-old airport security guard (Maria Schrader) who befriends a psychic (Pierre Sanoussi-Bliss). In German. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Now and Then—A writer (Demi Moore), a starlet (Melanie Griffith), a doctor (Rosie O'Donnell), and a housewife (Rita Wilson) gather in their Indiana hometown and recall the summer of 1970, when they were twelve. The phony "Big Chill" premise is a shame—the four talented actresses who play the girls (Gaby Hoffmann, Thora Birch, Christina Ricci, and Ashleigh Aston Moore, respectively) could have carried the movie far better on their own. Directed, baggily, by Lesli Linka Glatter.—S.K. (Village East Cinemas and 84th Street Sixplex.)

Persuasion—The young British director Roger Michell has made a Jane Austen movie that is never pretty and only occasionally charming; instead, it is troubled, astringent, and touched with melancholy—not unlike the novel. Amanda Root plays Anne Elliot, who once turned down Frederick Wentworth (Ciaran Hinds) and has regretted it ever since. They come together again—in the country, by the sea, and on the streets of Bath—and you can guess the outcome, but Michell somehow tenses a simple narrative into suspense. With Sophie Thompson as Anne's sister, Corin Redgrave as their monstrous father, and Fiona Shaw as the worldly wife of an admiral.—A.L. (9/25/95) (Eastside Playhouse, Quad Cinema, and Lincoln Square.)

Powder—A saccharine nightmare about an albino teen-ager with telekinetic powers and an otherworldly I.Q. (he was born during a thunderstorm). The beginning is a blatant rip-off of "Edward Scissorhands": the boy (Sean Patrick Flanery), whose eerie alabaster skin has kept him from interacting with others, is left alone by the death of his guardian; a kindly woman (Mary Steenburgen) takes him out of hiding and shows him the world. When he is taunted and bullied, the film moves into De Palma territory—things explode around him as they did around Andrew Stevens in "The Fury." But instead of going for wicked and funny, the director, Victor Salva, cues the maudlin music, and the movie becomes a tearjerker. It crashes (fittingly) in a final lightning storm of special effects.—B.D. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, Lincoln Square, and Embassy 3.)

Seven—The murders in David Fincher's serial-killer mystery are grisly tableaux, each artfully arranged to illustrate one of the seven deadly sins. This kind of self-conscious literary conceit can work if it's handled with a light, parodic touch, but the movie's clammy design and glum cinematography try to persuade us that what we're watching is a serious meditation on the nature of evil. The police detectives are Morgan Freeman, as weary old Somerset, and Brad Pitt, as brash young Mills; Freeman, with his immense dignity and authority, manages to keep his head above water, but Pitt goes under.—T.R. (19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Orpheum VII, and Lincoln Square. . . . ¶ Criterion Center; through Nov. 16.)

Strange Days—The year 2000 is hours away, the streets of Los Angeles are erupting with civil strife, and ex-cop Lenny Nero (Ralph Fiennes) has just received what appears to be evidence of police racism, rape, and murder. (The movie is like a mad fantasia on the Rodney King episode.) Enlisting the help of Max (Tom Sizemore) and Mace (Angela Bassett), Lenny sets out to crack the case. But for the director, Kathryn Bigelow, the case is mainly an excuse to let it rip. This is her loudest, most relentlessly wired movie to date. Some of the actors head straight over the top, too—Juliette Lewis is unwatchable in the role of Lenny's old girlfriend. But Fiennes holds steady; his moody, lonely performance lends the story an air of calm despair.—A.L. (10/9/95) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Regency, and National Twin.)

To Die For—Director Gus Van Sant's latest movie is his funniest, but also his least adventurous. Adapted by Buck Henry from Joyce Maynard's 1992 novel, it tells the story of Suzanne Stone (Nicole Kidman), a suburban nobody who, bored with her husband (Matt Dillon), decides to become a somebody in the world of television. She joins a local station, starts to shoot a documentary about three schoolkids, and gradually lures them into her web. The film is smartly structured, but Van Sant's touch is uncertain: the story's satirical bite begins to loosen as his camera lingers more and more on the plain, disaffected teen-agers. One of them is played by Joaquin Phoenix, whose brother River was so extraordinary in "My Own Private Idaho"; it's as though Van Sant longed to recapture the wayward, carnal atmosphere of the earlier movie but found himself locked in a smaller, more brittle project.—A.L. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, Ziegfeld, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

Total Eclipse—Unwatchable. The obsessive, destructive love affair of the poets Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine, as envisioned by director Agnieszka Holland and screenwriter Christopher Hampton, was an opera of mutual abuse, without humor or romantic passion. Leonardo DiCaprio plays Rimbaud as a drunken club kid, running wild over the well-dressed sets; David Thewlis's Verlaine is a parody of his magnificent creep in "Naked," ranting and raving dementedly about life. The movie is filled with so many hysterical let's-trash-the-hotel-room scenes that the audience goes numb.—B.D. (Village Theatre VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Vampire in Brooklyn—The jokes aren't funny, just recycled bits from movies like "An American Werewolf in London" and "Love at First Bite." As the violent bloodsucker who tries to lure Angela Bassett into his coffin, Eddie Murphy lowers his voice and flattens his energy; Allen Payne, who plays the rival for Bassett's affections, is far more charming. The picture, directed by Wes Craven, is a jack-o'-lantern without a candle.—B.D. (Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, Manhattan Twin, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, and Embassy 2.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE ADDICTION: Angelika Film Center. . . . **ASSASSINS:** Criterion Center. . . . **BABE** (reviewed in our issue of 9/4/95): Manhattan Twin. . . . **BELLE DE JOUR:** Cinema 3. . . . **BEYOND RANGOON** (8/21-28/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE BROTHERS MC MULLEN:** Village East Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **DEAD PRESIDENTS:** Embassy 4. . . . **DR. JEKYLL AND MS. HYDE:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **JADE:** Astor Plaza. . . . **MAYA LIN: A STRONG CLEAR VISION:** Quad Cinema. . . . **MOONLIGHT AND VALENTINO:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE POSTMAN:** Movieland 8th Street Triplex and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **SHOWGIRLS** (10/9/95): Criterion Center. . . . **SMOKE:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **SPECIES:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THREE WISHES:** First & 62nd Cinemas. . . . **THE USUAL SUSPECTS** (8/14/95): New York Twin, East 85th Street, Quad Cinema, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . **A WALK IN THE CLOUDS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **WATERWORLD** (8/7/95): Worldwide Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Plaza, 42 E. 58th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Baronet and Coronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gemini 1 and 2, Second Ave. at 64th St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
Tower East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
Embassy 1, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.

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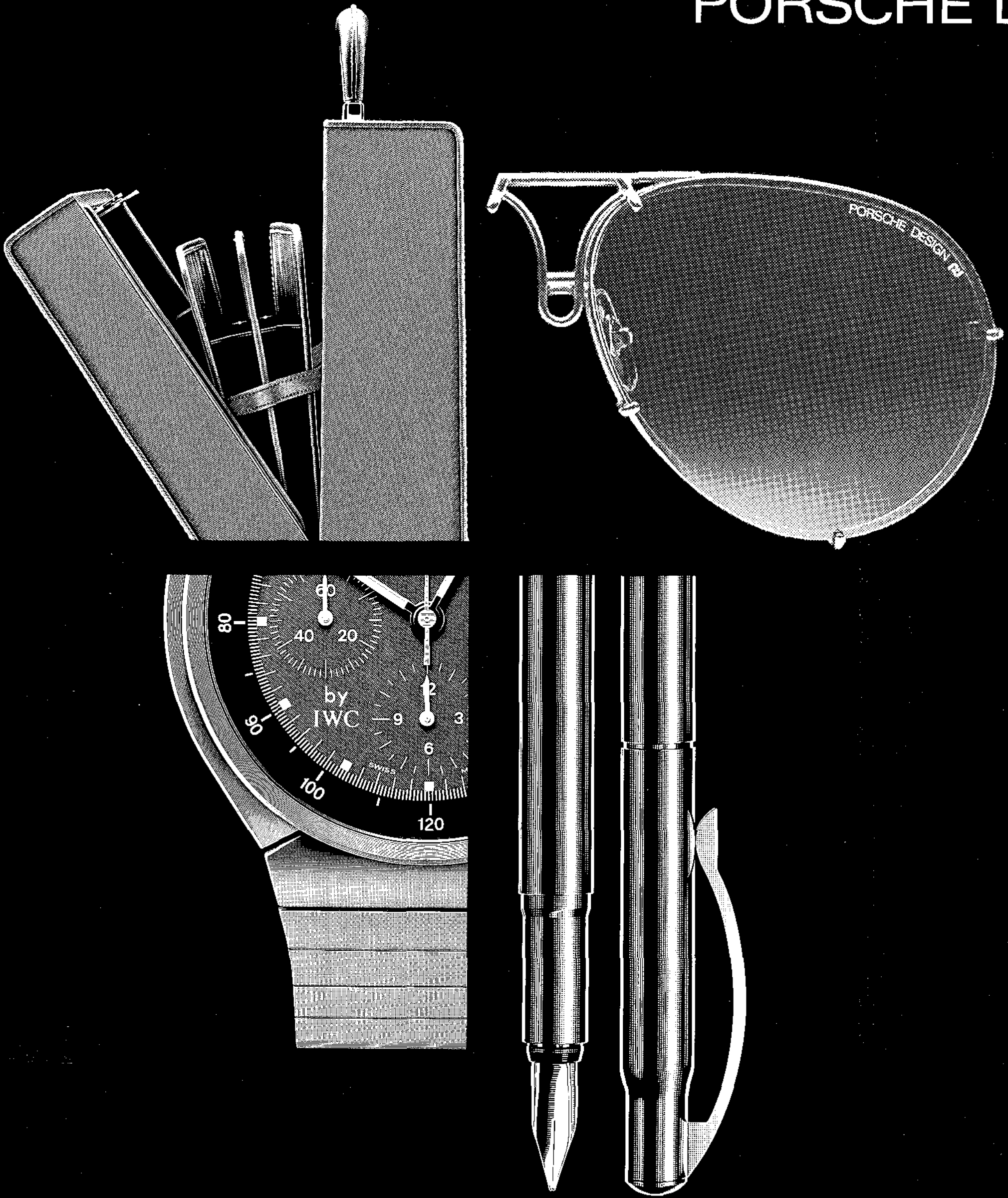

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REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Boiling Point (3-4x Jugatsu) (1990)—The English title both sums up the movie and alludes to the cult auteur Takeshi (Beat) Kitano's penchant for delayed explosions. In this bizarre coming-of-age-cum-gangster film, a sad-sack gas-station attendant and amateur baseball player (Masahiko Ono) barges into crime wars and gets in over his knucklehead; Kitano plays the supporting role of a cruel, polymorphous-perverse yakuza. The spine of the story is simply the antihero's slow burn, which the moviemaker fuels with his usual assortment of sadistic flourishes. Kitano's offbeat staging and pacing help hold your attention; so do his calculated perversities. But watching a worm take ninety-six minutes to turn is still a thin experience. In Japanese.—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; Nov. 15.)

Crime Without Passion (1934)—Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur devised a tricky plot about a devilishly unscrupulous lawyer (Claude Rains), who looks for a perfect alibi to conceal a murder. They also produced and directed, and they got very fancy; their pseudo-stream-of-consciousness story is dolled up with a lot of symbolism and dated avant-garde novelties. The famous Slavko Vorkapich designed two montage sequences, and the one with the Furies being unleashed is a true period piece; this is an entertainingly terrible movie.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Nov. 19.)

The Emperor Jones (1933)—Eugene O'Neill's play about a black man's disintegration was conceived in a semi-Expressionist style, and it was filmed in that style by Dudley Murphy, from a screenplay by Dubose Heyward. Murphy, a director with ideas but almost no technique, used painted sets, exaggerated décor, and an artificial jungle; the effects are sometimes powerful, sometimes ridiculous. O'Neill's violent emotions are accurately rendered by Paul Robeson and Dudley Digges, though they seem to be acting on a stage.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Nov. 19.)

Kangaroo (1986)—There's no cushioning of any kind on that phenomenal Australian actress Judy Davis. Playing the wife of D. H. Lawrence's alter ego Richard Somers (Colin Friels) in this film of his 1923 novel about turmoil Down Under, she makes the woman's thoughts and feelings come leaping out—despite Tim Burstall's stodgy direction and Evan Jones's reductive script. Davis herself provides the drama as Harriet Somers, who tries to transform marriage into perfect companionship, over the objections of her husband. (He believes that love must contain a quest for power.) The movie fails to present Richard's side with richness or clarity, and it stumbles when he flirts with the would-be dictator Kangaroo (Hugh Keays-Byrne), who has become an Aussie Teddy Roosevelt. The film is too polite and prettified for Lawrence. He wouldn't have liked the way Richard loses the debate with Harriet. But he might have enjoyed the irony that in making her an uncontested heroine, the filmmakers have turned feminism into a crutch for their gentility.—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; Nov. 17-18.)

The Queen (1968)—A documentary centering on the transvestites entered in a "Miss All-American" beauty contest for female impersonators held at Town Hall in 1967. Directed by Frank Simon, the film (which runs just over an hour) has considerable humor and drama, as well as that mixture of perversity and sadness distinctive to the drag scene.—P.K. (A Different Light Bookstore; Nov. 19.)

The Whole Town's Talking (1935)—John Ford directed this likable comedy about a gentle clerk, his gangster double (Edward G. Robinson in a dual role), and the hardboiled girl, Bill, whom the clerk adores. Bill is Jean Arthur, the comedienne with the wistful-husky voice; that voice was one of the best sounds in the romantic comedies of the thirties and forties.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Nov. 20-21.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Nov. 16: "The Legend of Suram Fortress" (1985, Sergei Paradjanov and Dodo Abashidze; in Georgian) and "The First Lad" (1958, Paradjanov; in Georgian). . . . ¶ A six-week showing of screwball comedies from the thirties and forties. Nov. 17-19: "Twentieth Century" (1934, Howard Hawks) and "His Girl Friday" (1940, Hawks). . . . Nov. 20-21: "The Whole Town's Talking" (†) and "A Slight Case of Murder" (1938, Lloyd Bacon).

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—Through Nov. 16: "Spike & Mike's Festival of Animation '95." . . From Nov. 17: "Eyes Without a Face" (1959, Georges Franju; in French).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A series of films from Australia. Nov. 16 at 2:30 and Nov. 17 at 6: "Death of a Soldier" (1986, Philippe Mora). . . . Nov. 16 at 6: "Devil in the Flesh" (1989, Scott Murray). . . . Nov. 16 at 8:15 and Nov. 17 at 2:30: "Celia" (1989, Ann Turner). . . . Nov. 17 at 8:15 and Nov. 18 at 2: "Kangaroo" (†). . . . Nov. 18 at 5 and Nov. 20 at 2:30: "Long Weekend" (1979, Colin Eggleston). . . . Nov. 19 at 2 and Nov. 20 at 6: Short films by Jane Campion and Pauline Chan. . . . Nov. 19 at 5 and Nov. 21 at 2:30: "Getting Wet" (1989, Paul J. Hogan) and "A Personal History of the Australian Surf: Being the Confessions of a Straight Poofter" (1981, Michael Blakemore). . . . Nov. 21 at 6: "In This Life's Body" (1984, Corinne and Arthur Cantrill). . . . ¶ Nov. 16 at 3 and 6: "If the Mango Tree Could Speak" (1994, Patricia Goudvis), a documentary. . . . ¶ Films based on the novels of Knut Hamsun. Nov. 17 at 3: "Pan" (1937, Olaf Fjord; in German). . . . Nov. 17 at 6: "The Telegraphist" (1993, Erik Gustavson; in Norwegian). . . . Nov. 18 at 2:30: "Hard Wills" (1923, John W. Brunius; silent). . . . Nov. 18 at 5: "Hunger" (1966, Henning Carlsen; in Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish). . . . Nov. 19 at 2:30 and Nov. 21 at 6: "Growth of the Soil" (1921, Gunnar Sommerfeldt; silent). . . . Nov. 19 at 5 and Nov. 21 at 3: "Short Is Summer" (1962, Bjarne Henning-Jensen; in Swedish). . . . Nov. 20 at 3: "Wanderers" (1989, Ola Solum; in Norwegian). . . . ¶ Nov. 20 at 6:30: "American Job" (1994, Chris Smith).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—A program of independent Japanese films; all in Japanese, with English subtitles. Nov. 15 at 2 and 6:30: "Boiling Point (3-4x Jugatsu)" (†). . . . Nov. 15 at 4 and 8:30: "Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence" (1983, Nagisa Oshima). . . . Nov. 16 at 2 and 9: "Gonin" (1995, Takashi Ishii). . . . Nov. 16 at 4:10: "Violent Cop" (1989, Takeshi Kitano). . . . ¶ Nov. 16 at 6:30: "The Woman in the Moon" (1995, Ariadne Kimberly). . . . ¶ Films directed by Lars von Trier; in Danish, with English subtitles. Nov. 17 at 2 and 6:30, Nov. 18-19 at 4, and Nov. 21 at 2: "The Element of Crime" (1984). . . . Nov. 17 at 4:15 and 8:45, Nov. 18 at 6:15, Nov. 19 at 6, and Nov. 21 at 4: "Epidemic!" (1987). . . . Nov. 18 at 8:30 and Nov. 19 at 8: "Zentropa" (1991). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. Nov. 18-19 at 2: "Freaky Friday" (1977, Gary Nelson).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—A sampling of films made at the Astoria Studio over its seventy-five-year history. Nov. 19 at 1: "Animal Crackers" (1930, Victor Heerman). . . . Nov. 19 at 3: "Crime Without Passion" (†). . . . Nov. 19 at 4:30: "The Emperor Jones" (†).

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—Nov. 21 at 7: "The Great Waltz" (1938, Julien Duvivier). . . . Nov. 21 at 9: "Miss Julie" (1950, Alf Sjöberg; in Swedish).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Nov. 21 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "The Lower Depths" (1936, Jean Renoir; in French), with Jean Gabin and Louis Jouvet.

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Nov. 19 at 7, the feature will be "The Queen" (†).

Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—"Beat Culture and the New America: 1950-65." Nov. 15 at 1:30 and Nov. 16 at 2:30: "Beat Generation" (1987, Janet Forman). . . . Nov. 17-19 at 1:30: "Flaming Creatures" (1963, Jack Smith) and "Blonde Cobra" (1963, Ken Jacobs). . . . ¶ Films directed by Robert Frank. Nov. 16 at 6:30 and Nov. 17-19 at 4: "Pull My Daisy" (1959) and "This Song for Jack" (1983).

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through Nov. 19: "Sentence of Death" (1953), with James Dean.

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forests

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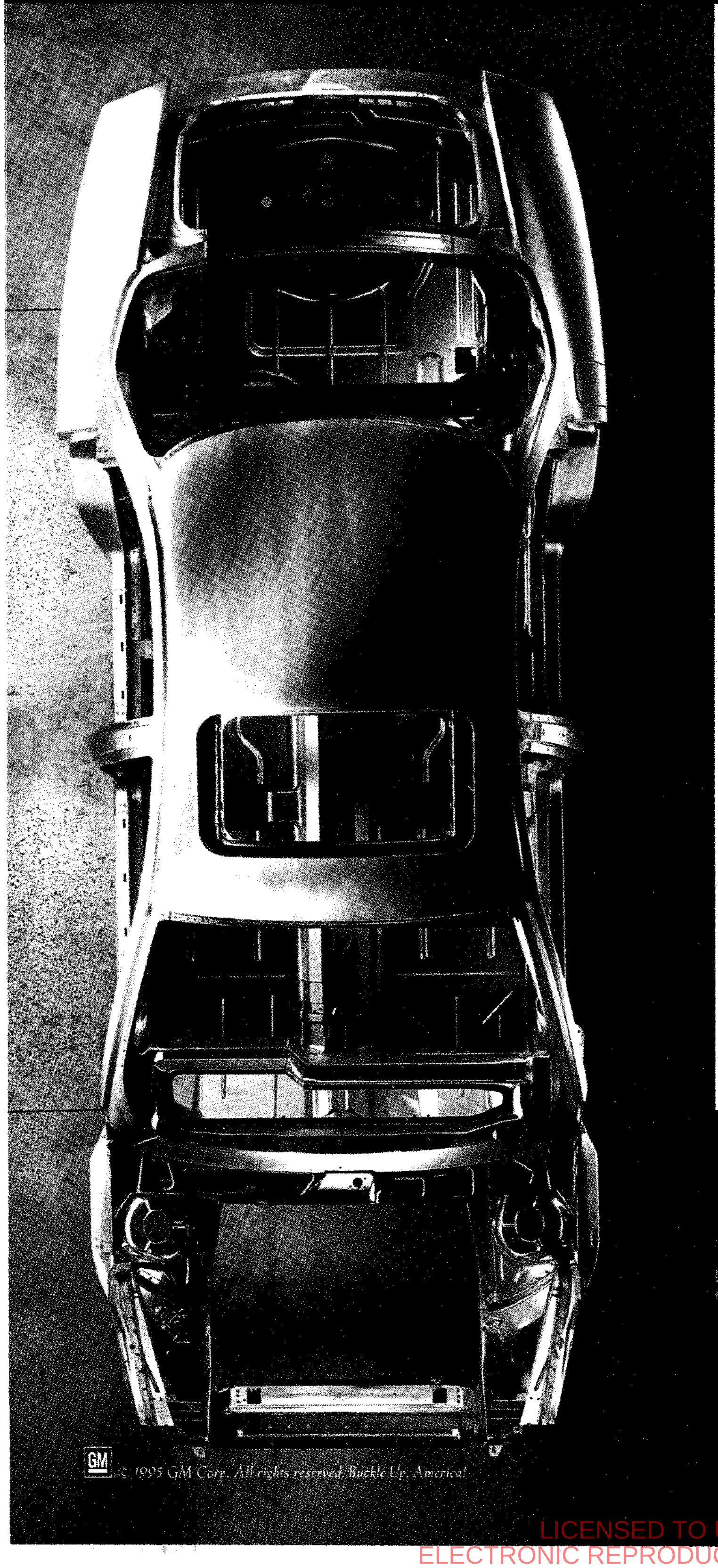

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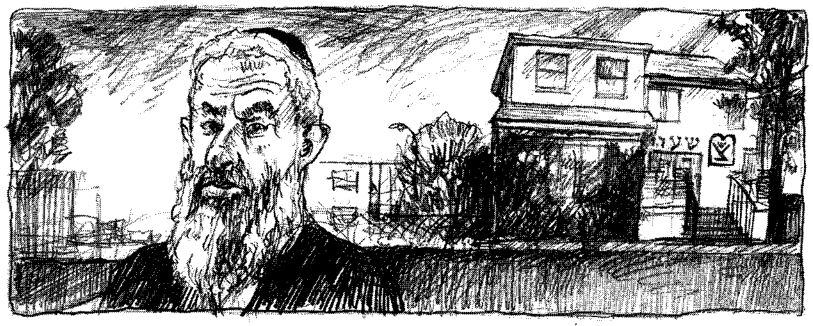
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

The Jewish conversation: New Yorkers discuss Yitzhak Rabin's assassination and the lethal power of words.

For the Jews of this city, the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin is a consuming tragedy, and the killing in Tel Aviv shattered a range of assumptions: it shattered any lingering notion that a Jew would never murder another, much less a Prime Minister; it shattered a myth of unfailing Israeli security; and, perhaps most of all, it shattered any illusion that in politics words are merely words.

After the news of Rabin's death, Jews, especially, had to take in, among other things, two linked images. First was the image of the assassin himself, the student of law, Yigal Amir. Here he came, strutting into court—slight, sure of his triumph, Oswald's crooked smirk on his face. He mocked Rabin as a man on his knees before the world. “I did this to stop the peace process,” he told reporters. “We need to be cold-hearted. . . . When you kill in war, it is an act that is allowed.”



Rabbi Abraham Hecht said in June that a Jew who surrenders Jewish land deserves the death penalty. Last Wednesday, his congregation fired him.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JARRETT HUDDLESTON

Then came Rabin's wife, Leah, with a terrible, steady look in her eyes, telling interviewers that she could not help blaming her husband's extremist critics for creating an atmosphere of vengeance in the country, and the opposition leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, for doing so little to stop them. “I do blame him,” she said. Mrs. Rabin recalled that the day before the assassination was a typical one for her and her husband—a typical encounter with hatred. “Last Friday,” she said, “when I got home at three o'clock they said to me, ‘Just wait. A year from now, in Kings of Israel Square, we'll kill you both. There you will be, like Mussolini and his mistress.’ ”

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Jews in New York live a ten-hour flight away from Tel Aviv, and yet these images and their implications absorbed their conversation utterly, as if the blood were fresh not only on the cobblestones of Tel Aviv but on West End Avenue and Eastern Parkway. The vast majority of Jews, of all political leanings—those for the peace process, those with serious reservations—deplored the killing, but there was a sense among some of them that some elements of New York Jewry bore a degree of guilt for what had happened. The rhetoric that was the assassin's echoed in the rhetoric of certain rabbis; it echoed in columns in the *Jewish Press* and the Yiddish weekly the *Algemeiner Journal;* it echoed in the chants and the placards of demonstrators so imbued with messianic fervor and hatred of Israel's Labor government that their language had become the language of vengeance.

Probably the most sensational example of inflammatory rhetoric in New York came from Abraham Hecht, a seventy-two-year-old rabbi who led the largest Syrian synagogue in Brooklyn, Shaare Zion. Last June, Hecht and several other rabbis who were opposed to the peace accords gathered at Ohab Zedek, a synagogue on West Ninety-fifth Street. Larry Yudelson, at the time a reporter for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, recalled that these rabbis—some of the most prominent Orthodox rabbis in the city—came mainly to express their support for the idea that settlers and soldiers on the West Bank should disobey government orders to evacuate the land. Yudelson said, “Rabbi Hecht got up and said that what Rabin and Peres were doing put them in the category of a *moser*, someone who surrenders people, like a Jew giving Jews over to the Crusaders.” A Jew who hands over Jewish land or wealth to an alien people, Hecht said, is guilty of a sin worthy of the death penalty. And, what is more, he went on, Maimonides, the greatest of all Jewish philosophers, said that if a man kills such a person he has done a good deed. “Hecht was the person who said it out loud, and everyone else kind of waved it off,” Yudelson recalled. “But no one said that Maimonides was wrong.” Or that his words were distorted by Hecht's reading.

Hecht's remarks made their way into the Israeli press and caused an outcry. With no evident shame, Hecht confirmed them to other journalists. Finally, four months later, on October 23rd, Hecht sent a pallid letter of regret to Rabin. "For my part," he wrote, "I wish to repudiate any words and actions of anger which have caused hurt." These words were outweighed, however, by a long disquisition to Rabin on the history of Jewish suffering in the twentieth century. Colette Avital, the Israeli consul-general in New York, said of the apology, "I don't think it was very sincere. I get the feeling that it was extracted from him with great pain."

When the news of Rabin's assassination hit, reporters began to call Rabbi Hecht for a reaction. His answering service said that he was unavailable. His neighbors said that he was on vacation. "Hecht is suffering terribly," said one of his colleagues, who asked not to be identified. "I know the man since school days, and I know he felt it just was not permissible for Rabin to give up part of Israel." Last Wednesday, Hecht was fired.

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Letty Cottin Pogrebin, the former president of Americans for Peace Now, said the assassination should serve as a "wakeup call."

THE Rabin assassination occurred just a few weeks after another event that, if to a lesser degree, absorbed the Jewish conversation: the emergence of Louis Farrakhan as the leader of the Million Man March on Washington. Suddenly, a demagogue who thought of Jews as "bloodsuckers" was moving from the wings to center stage. The alarm was general.

Last week, at a dinner at the Essex House in memory of Rabin, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, the former president of Americans for Peace Now, said that the assassination had to serve as a "wakeup call." She explained, "The irony is that when the hatred comes from a Farrakhan we always remember what to think and how speech can lead to something even worse, but when the hateful speech comes from one of our own we forget."

Hecht's *fatwa* from Flatbush was only the most outrageous moment in a long litany of threatening language and demonstrations in the city. The lunatic fringe has been loud and busy. Last week, the New York correspondent for the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* filed a story saying that much of the hatred directed toward Rabin had its roots in New York, including demonstrations at which Rabin was hanged in effigy and his government compared to the *Judenräte*, the Jewish councils that collaborated with the Nazis. The examples of extremism in New York have been chilling and legion. In January, 1994, unexploded bombs were found and defused outside the Chelsea offices of Americans for Peace Now. Last summer, Abraham Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, resigned from his shul in Teaneck, because the rabbi there, Steven Pruzansky, had declared that Rabin was the equivalent of a Nazi dupe. Writers for the *Jewish Press* referred to Rabin as a traitor. Last year, the *Algemeiner Journal*, the largest Yiddish weekly in the country, published a letter calling Rabin a Jewish Hitler.

"I meant to write a letter to the editor asking how the paper could publish this," said Dr. Allan Nadler, the director of research at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. "What's happening in Israel and spilling over into Brooklyn is unprecedented. I was recently studying Yiddish documents on debates at the turn of the century between Zionists and non-Zionists. The arguments were hot, but they did not get personal. A certain loftiness prevailed. I understand that for many Jews here and in Israel it's a traumatic sacrifice to give back parts of Biblical Israel—the most emotional issue Israel has ever faced—but now we see what language can help foment."

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TWO days after the assassination, Dr. Norman Lamm, the president of Yeshiva University, in Washington Heights, called an assembly. Lamm, who is considered a moderate at Yeshiva, told the students and faculty that the time had come to recognize the correlation between rhetoric and action. When Baruch Goldstein killed twenty-nine Muslims at prayer last year in Hebron, it did not go unremarked at the school that he was a graduate of Yeshiva. But now, somehow, the introspection was deeper. Now both the killer and the victim were Jews, and there was evidence that the assassin had acted as part of a larger conspiracy. Lamm quoted the passage from Proverbs that says, "*Mavet v'chayim b'yad lashon*" ("Death and life are in the hand of the tongue"). One rabbi called the speech "a new 'Never again.'"

Yeshiva's hard-liners condemned the assassination of Rabin, but they are unapologetic about their rhetoric. Rabbi Moshe D. Tendler, one of the best-known teachers there and an authority on traditional Jewish law, said in a recent article in the *Algemeiner Journal* (which was reprinted in English in the *Jewish Press*) that Orthodox rabbis in favor of Rabin's policies were complicit in murder. "Those so-called rabbis who support the present peace process advocate a violation of a basic tenet of Torah law and ethics," Tendler wrote. "Their ignorance disgraces our Torah, and they endanger the lives of their brethren. The lives of the one hundred fifty *kedoshim*, victims of the peace process, is on their hands."

"It's true, I wrote it and stand by it," Tendler said last week. "By agreeing to sacrifice Jews now for some notion of peace ten, twenty years from now—to support that is to be complicit in murder."

Allan Nadler, of YIVO, for one, wondered what was happening in Washington Heights. A few days after Rabin's murder, he dropped by a kosher restaurant near Yeshiva for lunch and,

After the president of Yeshiva University addressed students and faculty, one rabbi called the speech "a new 'Never again.'"

he recalled, saw a handbill in the window signed by several core figures in Yeshiva's rabbinical establishment. The handbill was a Daas Torah, a public statement of religious interpretation, and it called the Rabin government treasonous. "Don't you think you ought to take it down now?" Nadler said to the restaurant's proprietor. "It's in poor taste." He recalled, "Then the guy said, smirking, 'To the contrary. Maybe now Rabin sees the truth.' At one of the tables, some students giggled. I was shocked. I've been studying Orthodoxy for fifteen years, and this was the first time I'd found myself being naïve."

At another restaurant near Yeshiva, a young rabbi and faculty member, Moshe Rosenberg, sat over breakfast with his elder daughter late last week. As his little girl ate, Rosenberg said that the assassination of Rabin should serve to show how "what may have started out as honest opposition becomes the drawing of a bull's-eye on the national leader of Israel," and he went on, "The sense I have is that the genie is out of the bottle. You haven't just compromised the life of one man. You have made the office of Prime Minister no longer inviolable. We knew this was the case in other countries—in banana republics—but now this has come to the State of Israel. We see ourselves as so strictly regulated by the norms of Jewish law that we don't stop to realize that a person can distort Jewish law, can use it as a pretext for an execution. We feel ashamed and embarrassed that such a person could come from circles we identify with.

"You know," the rabbi went on, "the other day there was a visitor to my synagogue, in Kew Gardens Hills, who said to me, 'People ask me how I feel about the assassination, and I say, "*Baruch shepetarani.*" ' This is the blessing said by a father over his Bar Mitzvah boy, when he no longer bears the responsibility for the son's sins. It means to be well rid of someone. This visitor said that his one regret was that the assassination came only after so many Jews had been killed in Israel. Thank God, I feel that such people are few. I hope they will be isolated by the community."

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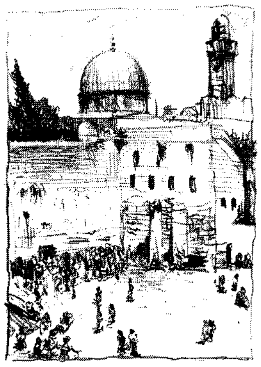
LAST week, at Crown Bagel, off Eastern Parkway, a small group of Lubavitcher men debated the issues

O JERUSALEM!

I LIVE in Jerusalem, on Lovers of Zion Street. It's named for an association that was a forerunner of modern political Zionism. As a name, Lovers of Zion has a Victorian poignancy befitting a group established in Russia in the late nineteenth century, whose pioneer expeditions to Palestine were small in scale but inarguably started something big. The debate now going on in Jerusalem, with Yitzhak Rabin dead and winter bearing down, is: Who are the true lovers of Zion?



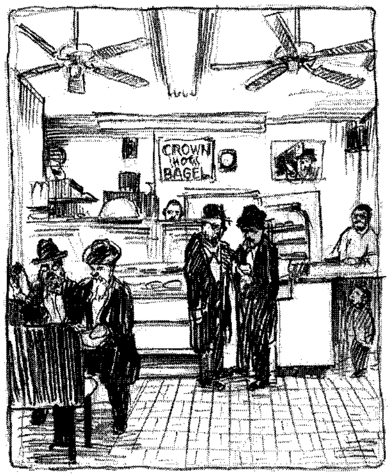
Around the corner from my house is the Prime Minister's official residence, on Balfour Street. On his block, the trees are shedding their narrow, dusty leaves in what to an American seems a weak parody of autumn. The leaves don't flutter and fall; they just appear one morning on the street, and that's it. Summer's over. What flutters here is the festive, colorful banners that have been wound by the wind around the balustrades of the stone apartment buildings of Jerusalem. A building near Rabin's former residence was until recently virtually wrapped in these anti-Oslo banners, hung there more than two years ago, perhaps for the Prime Minister's edification. "The Nation Is with the Golan." Or, more pointedly, "This Is No Peace."

In Israel, saying "Yerushalmi," or "Jerusalemite," is like saying "New Yorker" in America. People know what you mean: someone a little too aggressive, too brusque, less agreeable than the ordinary dweller in the land of Zion. Yitzhak Rabin was born here, and he was a true Jerusalemite—tough, trenchant, unhumorous. His army conquered this city for Israel in 1967. And, of course, the disputed status of his birthplace—whether it remains unified under Israeli rule or its Palestinian population achieves some form of political autonomy—may ultimately be the biggest obstacle to the peace he was working for during his last years.

Shmuel Kohn, a Brooklynite turned Jerusalemite (like so many recent religious immigrants), was praying at the Western Wall in the Old City when Rabin's funeral began. His father, Yehuda, a small man wearing, like his son, a less than new black hat, was there, too. The two Kohns cannot stomach the peace process. Yehuda's jacket lapel was rent in a traditional symbol of mourning, but not for Rabin. "Give back Hebron? The Golan? Jerusalem? He drove this young boy—who loves Israel—to kill," Yehuda said of Yigal Amir, the assassin.

Outside a shop in the Arab bazaar a few steps from the Wall, Abdallah Hassan was watching Rabin's funeral with some friends. A siren blared, and Israelis stopped in their tracks to pay their respects to the fallen Prime Minister. Traffic halted. Soldiers saluted. But in the bazaar business continued. A vender sold a glass of strong coffee from his tray. A woman in a long, dark robe bought a bag of cumin. "I am not happy or sad," Hassan said as President Clinton began his eulogy. "But then I am not Israeli."

On the sidewalk outside the Prime Minister's residence, *yahrzeit* candles still flickered in Rabin's memory every night last week. I walked over there one evening along Jabotinsky Street, named for the philosophical forebear of Israel's nationalist right wing. Scores of skinny young people who will soon join the Army were sitting cross-legged against the walls of the residence's garden, smoking cigarettes; they wore black, but not black hats, and talked about Israel and the achievements of a seventy-three-year-old politician. The drone of chanting rose from the neighborhood's Orthodox synagogues. Police cars and Army trucks sped by. And here and there, in the city where he was born, fluttering banners still remonstrated with a dead man. —AMY WILENTZ connected to Rabin's assassination. They were subdued. There was none of the spirit of argument that Lubavitchers can usually arouse. One young man, David Friedman, said that the murder was "outrageous," and that the tiny minority who were saying they were glad were saying so because Rabin "didn't have such clean hands." He referred specifically to an incident in 1948, when Rabin was forced to fire on the Altalena, a ship carrying Jewish soldiers and arms for the Irgun gang, because independence had already been declared. Friedman's opinion was that of the majority in the neighborhood: condemnation, but with a certain understanding of those who were more vituperative.



In Crown Heights, one Lubavitcher man said, to the shock of others, "If an Arab came along now and killed Peres, I wouldn't be unhappy."

Joseph Muchkin, a fabric dealer in his forties, said his main fear was that "they're going to use this to smear us." He went on, "We're not extremists. All we say is what the Torah says: The land belongs to us and God gave it to us. I'll condemn assassination and say I wish an Arab had killed him. To be truthful, if an Arab came along now and killed Peres I wouldn't be unhappy. He's a traitor. He's taking away our land. Look, it's only the hand of God that has prevented us all from being drowned by the Arabs in the lake. I think Begin was a traitor, too, for making peace with Egypt. I'm hard-line if that means going by the laws as a Jew. If you consider yourself secular, you have no right to Israel."

One other man in the bagel shop nodded in agreement. The rest—there were at least half a dozen—looked on with embarrassment. The eldest in the group closed his eyes a moment in pain, and then turned and walked out the door. "I can't listen to this any longer," he said.

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The call among most conservative Jewish columnists in the secular press has been dual: mourn Rabin but do not cease to maintain a civilized opposition to the peace process. More complicated is the question of rhetoric. Norman Podhoretz, who was the editor of *Commentary* until this year, when he handed over the job to Neal Kozodoy, said that the assassination was "one of the great infamies of Jewish history," but he was still struggling to answer the question of rhetoric. "It's a bad moment at which to discuss this dispassionately," he said. "This kind of rhetoric has been used by both sides in the Israeli political debate, and it's bad in itself, even if it doesn't have repercussions like this. If you start apportioning blame as a result of the use of rhetoric, there is a lot of blame to go around. Now they're calling Netanyahu a murderer. The violence of the rhetoric in Israel is not a new story. Equally harsh rhetoric was used by the left against Shamir and Begin."

Politically, Podhoretz was sure the killing would be "very bad news for the opposition." He said, "The opposition is inevitably going to be smeared and will find itself inhibited and tongue-tied. Rabin will be seen as a sacred martyr, whose policies led to his murder and therefore have to be pursued."

Arthur Hertzberg, a prominent liberal rabbi and scholar from New Jersey, said that what was happening now was a Jewish reckoning with language. "For eighteen centuries, we have had a free ride and have been able to say that this or that son of a bitch is anti-God. But the words lacked power and guns. I think the last time something like this really happened was the period from 66 to 70 A.D., when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and the zealots killed the moderates. After that, Jews had no arms, and we could cheerfully use rhetoric without much responsibility."

Hertzberg went on, "In America, much of this language comes from Holocaust survivors and their children. It's an expression of anger at powerlessness. In the aftermath of the Holocaust—the supreme moment of Jewish powerlessness—there was a feeling that some great messianic event would occur to restore this wounded people. When you get into messianic thinking, you are at the opposite pole from democratic thinking. If you conceive of Israel as a secular democracy with a role for Judaism, then the government's decisions are to be accepted, but if you conceive of it as the first stage of the messianic age and drama, then a government that stands in the way is illegitimate.

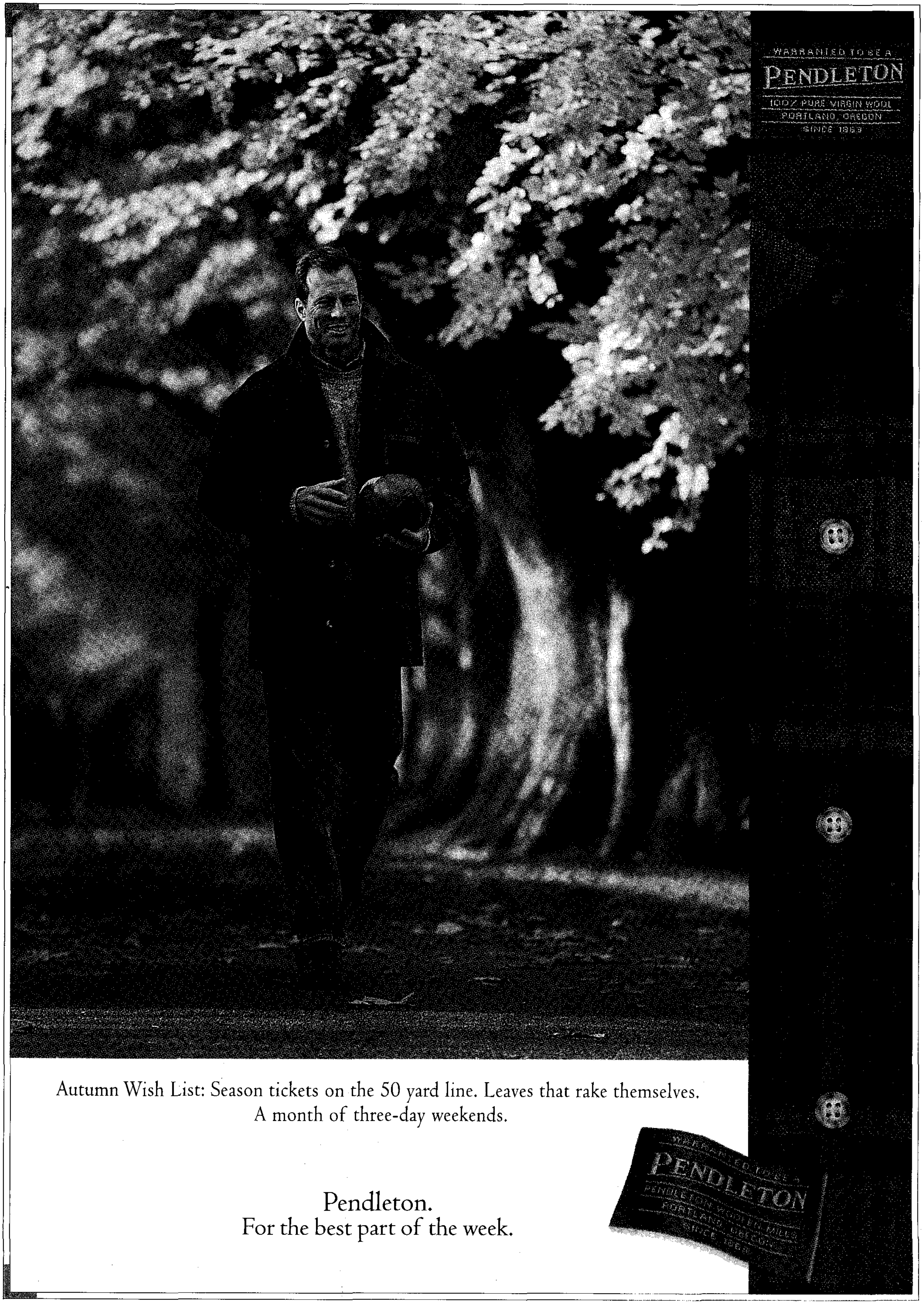
"The greatest contribution religion can make to the conflict in the Middle East is to get out of it. By agreeing to give back land, Rabin was also agreeing to give up Jewish mysticism. Rabin and Arafat were turning from a religious war of absolutes to a worldly accommodation and the hope of cultivating peace. This was a more profound religious act than anyone has yet understood. For myself, I do not believe in messianic expectations. If the Messiah were going to come in our century, he should have shown up at Auschwitz, and the Messiah who did not show up at Auschwitz is not going to show up on Eastern Parkway or in the parking lot of a West Bank settlement. The only thing we can base politics on is human reason."

•

At Carnegie Hall, Itzhak Perlman improvised a lamentation that went beyond words.

During the week of shivah, the Jewish discussion went beyond talk at least once. At a memorial service in Carnegie Hall, Itzhak Perlman improvised a mournful lamentation that chilled everyone. "It was a collage of feeling," Perlman said later. "For two or three days, it was almost as if I were in the middle of a nightmare. I kept thinking I'd wake up, and I didn't. Friends called from all over the world to commiserate, as if we'd lost a close relative, even a parent. This is a time when we all need to talk to one another. But sometimes there are no words."

—David Remnick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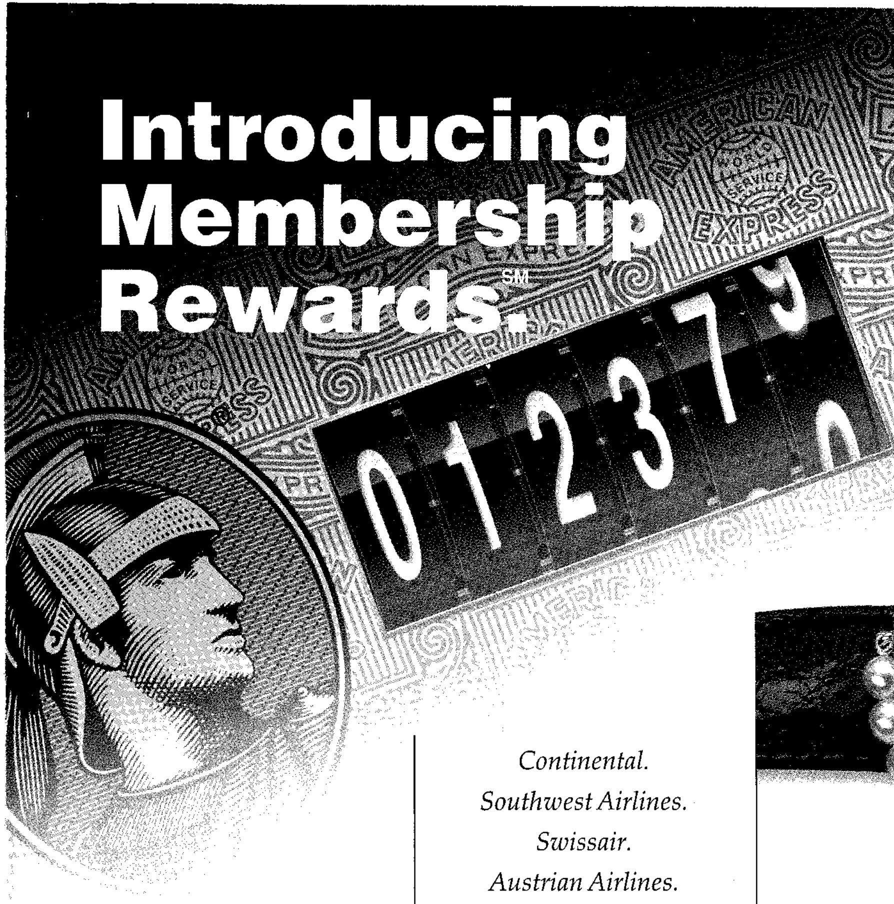

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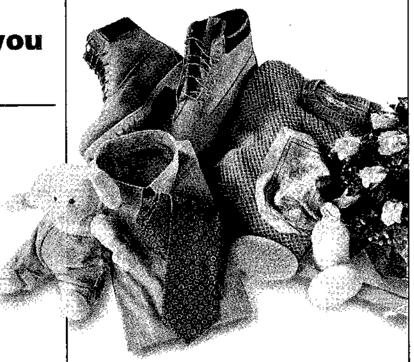

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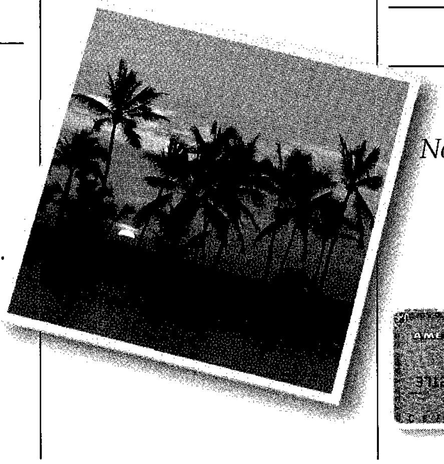

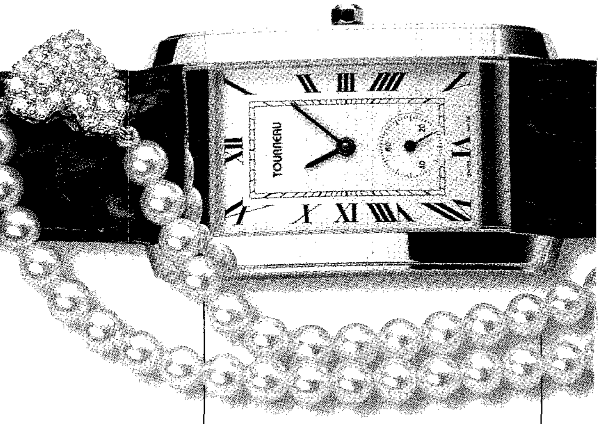

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

SEGREGATION ANXIETY

Colin Powell passes up the opportunity to reverse a historical trend.

BY MICHAEL KELLY

It is an abiding paradox of politics that epochal events, because of their size, are the hardest to see in their full dimensions. Colin Powell's decision last week not to run as a Republican candidate for the Presidency in 1996 was one of those events. Appearing before an international political press in a hotel ballroom outside of Washington, D.C., Powell bowed out of Presidential contention with a brief, modest, elegant speech, after which he answered the mostly gentle questions of a mostly admiring audience. Only once, as he was nearing the end of his remarks, did he touch on the issue that made his decision so important.

Powell: Where will the two parties go without him?

AHMET GÖRGÜN

"Could you tell us about why you think the Republican Party has not appealed more to blacks?" a white reporter asked.

One of Powell's many graces (and one of the reasons that he is more naturally popular than, say, Bob Dole or Newt Gingrich) is that he does not stoop to public displays of sarcasm, and he answered the question straight. Blacks "have seen the Democratic Party as more in line with their needs over the years," Powell explained. "And the Republican Party has not succeeded in breaking that hold. And I think it is in the interest of the country, and in the interest of African-Americans, to have that hold shaken loose, so that African-Americans have a greater choice and can pick from more than one option to satisfy their political needs, and to make sure their needs are taken care of."

Powell's analysis only underscored the unhappy significance of his decision. In choosing not to run, he was, by default, choosing to perpetuate the very problem he had identified. And he was right in suggesting that the problem threatened the national interest. The largest, and the most dangerous, trend in American politics today is its increasing segregation, with the Republican Party becoming the majority party and the Democratic Party becoming the minority party, in all senses of the words. This trend isn't in evidence everywhere in the country, and it isn't irreversible. But it is largely the case in the South, which is not only where the majority of blacks live but also the nation's most important political region, because of its historical tendency to vote as a bloc for one party or the other.

Moreover, the trend has accelerated over the past few years, giving rise to a political structure in which the majority party is increasingly under the control of the majority race and the minority party is increasingly under the control of the minority race. Whites now dominate a Republican Party that enjoys an imposing national advantage, while blacks constitute a growing percentage of a weakening Democratic Party. In such a structure, there is little practical incentive for white politicians to pay attention to the needs of blacks or for black politicians to pay attention to the needs of whites. When whites represent whites and blacks represent blacks, segregation becomes not only logical but also respectable, and even fashionable, among the political classes of both races, thereby guarantee-

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"Thank you, Nathaniel. I think you, too, are a very scary young lawyer."

• •

ing both white political supremacy and black political irrelevance. Colin Powell had the chance—by himself, by the power of a single decision—to disrupt this lethal trend, possibly to reverse it. He let the opportunity pass.

MOST of American politics is segregated by the nature of things. Ninety-five per cent of the black voters in this country live in only twenty-two states. The elected officials of more than half the states in the Union do not represent blacks, because there are, practically speaking, no blacks for them to represent. Blacks are concentrated in the eleven states of the South, and in parts of the industrial Midwest, the Northeast, and California, but the majority—about fifty-three per cent—live in the South. There, until as recently as thirty years ago, they were, of course, largely denied the opportunity to vote. From the eighteen-nineties, when white Democrats in the South effectively purged blacks from the voting rolls, to 1960, seventy per cent or more of all voting-age blacks in the South were not registered to vote. The voting drives of the civil-rights movement began to register blacks in significant numbers in the early sixties, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 achieved, finally, the registration of a majority of voting-age blacks in every Southern state.

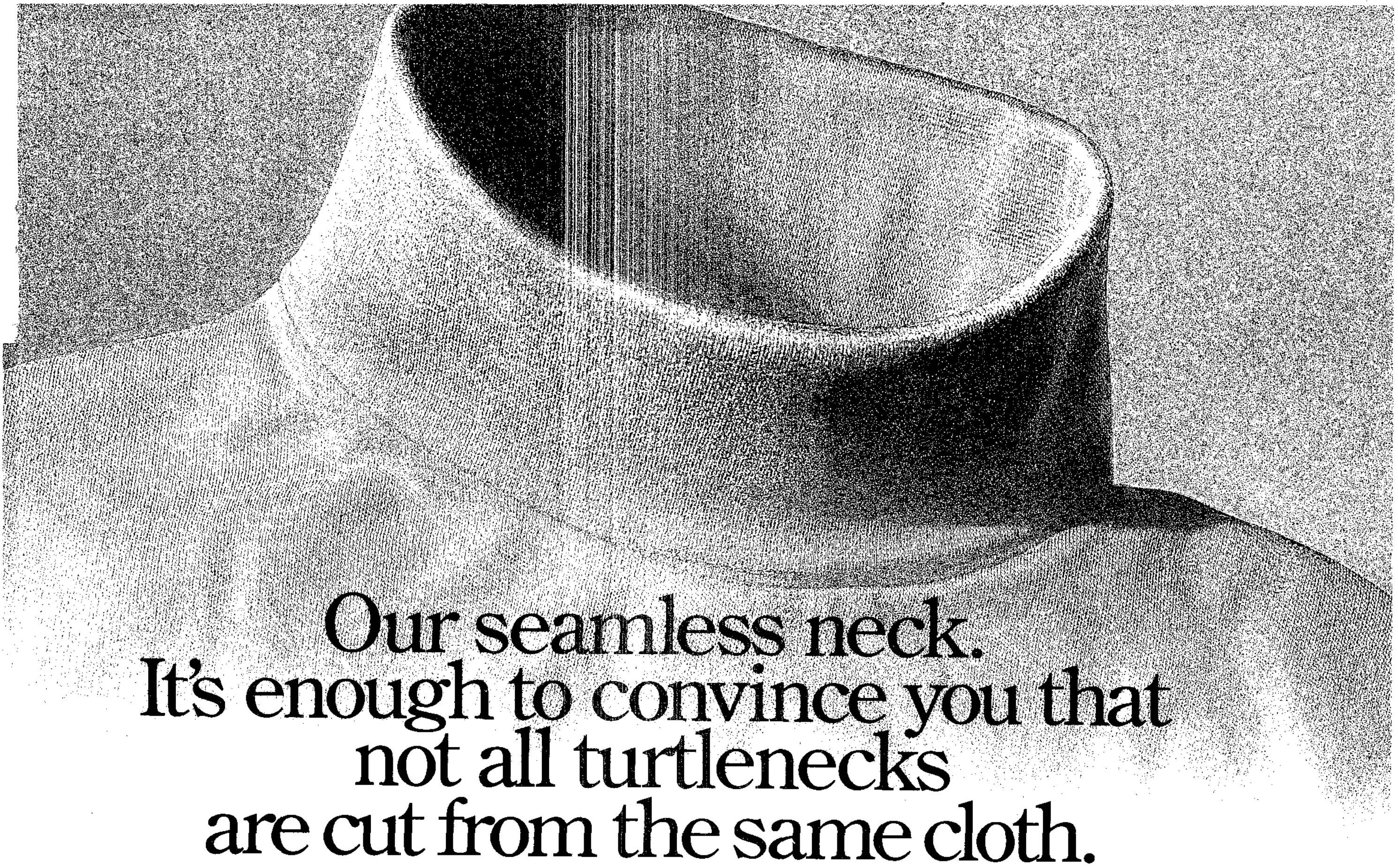
The rise of black voting power created the South's first sustained exercise in integrated politics—a biracial coalition consisting of two relatively small groups (blacks and white liberals) and an overwhelming majority (white conservatives). For more than twenty years, this unnatural coalition maintained the Democratic party's hegemony over offices below the Presidential level—governorships, congressional delegations, and state and county legislative seats.

As blacks became increasingly visible in Democratic party politics, so did white Southern flight. The Republicans were shrewd about exploiting white voters' racial resentment. The Presidential election of 1972, when Richard Nixon successfully pursued a well-orchestrated "Southern strategy," marked the beginning of the transformation of the solid-Democratic South to the solid-Republican South. From that year, the conservative white voters, who constituted the majority of the Party's biracial coalition, almost invariably deserted Democratic candidates in Presidential elections. But they stayed with the party of their fathers in lesser races. Now these voters are finally fleeing the party altogether, leaving the Democratic coalition in extremis and engendering the new segregation of Southern politics.

Charles Bullock, a political scientist at the University of Georgia, calls what is happening in the South a radical change, a "growing public perception that race and party are coterminus." What fascinates and also worries Bullock is that this radical change took place so quickly. "What was for many years a gradual slippage in white support for Democrats has become a stampede for Republicans," Bullock says. "Any time you see a Republican who is winning, you can be damn sure he has swept the white vote—often sixty per cent or higher. It has become a situation in many places where a Democrat is not even competitive in the white vote. Conceivably, the model of where the South might be going is South Carolina. The polls there find that the share of white males who identify with the Democratic Party is now down around ten per cent, while for white females it is only about twenty per cent."

David A. Bositis, a senior political analyst at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, in Washington, D.C., which monitors and researches issues of race and politics, points to the exit polls of the 1994 elections, when Republicans achieved unprecedented victories across the South. The figures dramatically demonstrate the pattern of a white majority's voting Republican and a black majority's voting Democrat. "In the Georgia governor's race, the black vote for the Democrat was eighty-nine per cent," Bositis says. "The whites voted for the Republican, fifty-eight to forty-two. In South Carolina, blacks voted Democratic ninety-two to eight, and whites voted Republican sixty-three to thirty-five. In Tennessee, blacks voted Democrat ninety to nine, whites went Republican fifty-eight to forty-one. In Texas, blacks were for Democrats eighty-five to fifteen, whites for Republicans sixty-two to thirty-six. In the Virginia Senate race, blacks went Democrat ninety-one to five, while whites voted Republican fifty to thirty-seven."

An axiom of history holds that every large event—a war, a revolution, the rise or fall of a political power—has both its long-term and its proximate causes. In the



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long term, the sudden collapse of the Democrats' Southern coalition was perhaps the inevitable result of the dying off of older Democrats and the unhappiness of conservative whites over the liberalization of the national party on matters of race and social values. But there needed to be a proximate cause to finally wreck the Southern Democrats' old and battered machine. And in the early nineteen-nineties one arrived, partly owing to the machinations of Lee Atwater, the Republican Party's grand master of race politics.

The 1982 amendments to the Voting Rights Act had mandated racial reapportionment in the South (to take place after the 1990 census), in order to create new strongholds of minority representation. Atwater, who died in 1991, saw a historic opportunity to break the Democrats' biracial coalition. The strategy was simple: the Republicans would join forces with black Southern Democrats to create new majority-black districts and new, presumably Republican, majority-white districts. Black Democrats would win elections at the expense of white Democrats—but the Republicans would win the most elections of all. Benjamin Ginsberg, a lawyer in Washington, was the Republican National Committee's chief counsel at the time.

"I began working at the R.N.C. in 1989, and Lee Atwater's first words to me were 'Do something about redistricting,' " Ginsberg told me. "We began looking at the data, and we saw that white Southern Democrats had dominated the redistricting process literally since the Civil War, and that had created underrepresentation for two groups—Republicans and minority voters. It was evident, especially to blacks and Republicans, that there was an alliance to build in the state legislatures that were going to be handling redistrictings."

Under Ginsberg's direction, the Republican National Committee undertook a campaign of guerrilla warfare, working with black Democrats against white Democrats in legislatures throughout the South. "Two minorities working together obviously have more members than either minority working alone, and in some states that was enough to tip the balance," Ginsberg recalled. "In some states, it wasn't enough to pass a positive plan, but it was enough to block the legislature from being able to act, which flipped the matter to the courts. We knew we would receive a fairer shake from the courts than from any white Democratic legislature. Part of the calculus was that there were a lot more Republicans on the bench in the nineteen-nineties than there had been before."

Victories in racial-reapportionment cases tend to go to those who can produce the most impressive redistricting plans. In the past, Ginsberg says, the white Democratic majorities in the Southern legislatures had enjoyed one key advantage over the black Democrats and the white Republicans: they had computers. "It was clear to us that a computer was a great advantage over having to rely on colored crayon maps," Ginsberg says. "So one of the things we were very aggressive about doing was making sure our folks had computer capacity to go toe to toe with the majority. We directed our state parties, and they came up with relatively inexpensive state-mapping systems, and we generally made our software available to the voting-rights groups that wanted it."

The racial reapportioning of 1991 and 1992 produced great gains for black Democrats throughout the country, but particularly in the South. Sixteen black politicians, twelve of them from the South, won freshmen seats in Congress, giving African-Americans their highest level of representation since Reconstruction. And, just as the Republicans had calculated, reapportionment cost white Democrats heavily in the South. The redistricting that sequestered black voters in their own majority districts necessarily removed blacks from other areas, creating heavily white districts. This proved toxic to white Democrats who had previously won elections by pulling both white and black votes. In 1992, white Southern Democrats lost twelve districts. Two years later, sixteen more Democratic congressmen, all white, went down.

Black Democrats argue that redistricting was only a minor cause of the white Democrats' woes. But, whether redistricting cost six or twelve or sixteen seats, there is no question that it helped trigger the larger collapse of the Democratic Party in the South. "The Democratic Party was able to maintain its biracial coalition for many years by deëmphasizing race," Bullock says. "That fell apart in 1991 and 1992 over the redistricting battles, where race was pushed to the front and center and stayed there for

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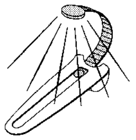

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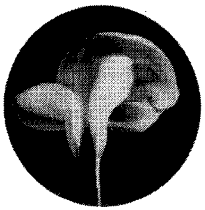

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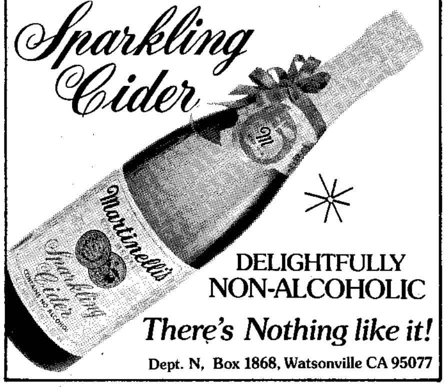

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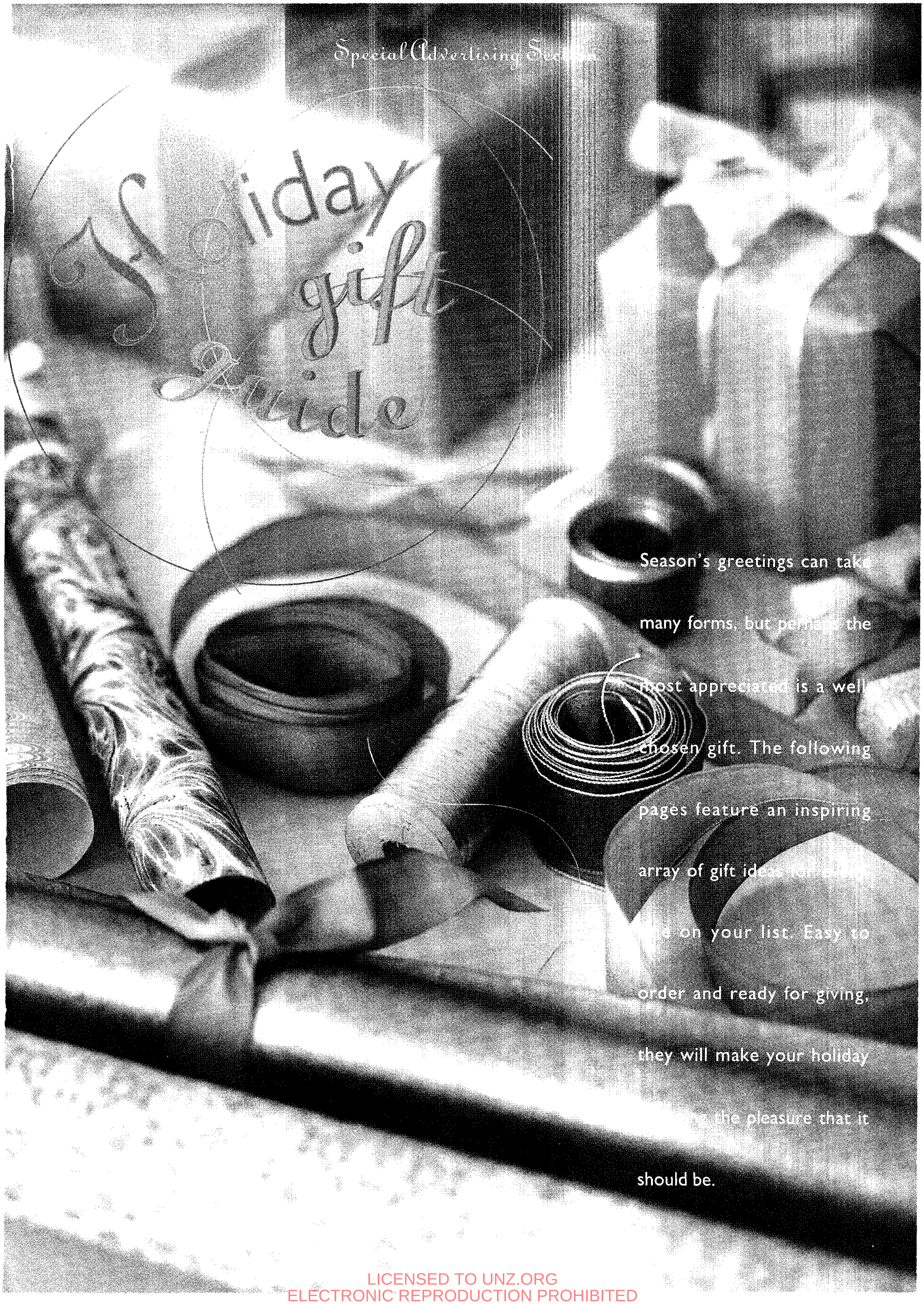
weeks and weeks. There was redistricting in every one of the Southern states. The fact that black Democrats plotted with Republicans made the white Democrats greatly mistrust them, while the black Democrats looked at the white Democrats and said, 'If you aren't willing to let us have a better level of representation, you must be racist.' "

Ginsberg is convinced that the emotional impact of the black-G.O.P. alliance "absolutely" shattered the old black-white Democratic coalition. When I asked him if the R.N.C.'s campaign of working with black Democrats to destroy white Democrats had been given a name, he said that it had not, but he jokingly suggested one: "Project Ratfuck."

Although the breakdown of the Democrats' Southern coalition has certainly hurt white Southern Democrats, it has had an even larger impact on the Republicans' true target: the national Democratic Party. Lee Atwater understood better than anyone the national implications of the stakes involved in the new politics of Southern segregation. With about six times as many white voters as black ones in the South, the Republican Party has, at least for now, come to own this region. And owning the South, which supplies fifty-four per cent of the electoral votes needed to elect a President, has the potential to make the Republican Party what the Democratic Party once was—a true majority party, with the power to dominate national politics and dictate national policy.

Meanwhile, the black Democrats of the South have not fared nearly as well as their Republican partners in the redistricting plots. Hastings Wyman, Jr., the editor of the *Southern Political Report*, a Washington-based newsletter, says that although reapportionment has helped blacks win more elected offices, it has, in a larger sense, cost them real power. The fact that blacks account for only about seventeen per cent of the eligible vote in the South means that black Democrats constitute a true minority, isolated in a political world dominated by white Republicans. "It's a tradeoff for blacks," Wyman says. "The upside is having someone in office, with all that goes with that—the power to hire and fire, to be in the press, and so on. The downside is you don't get your bills passed."

The final legacy of redistricting, political experts on the South say, is likely to



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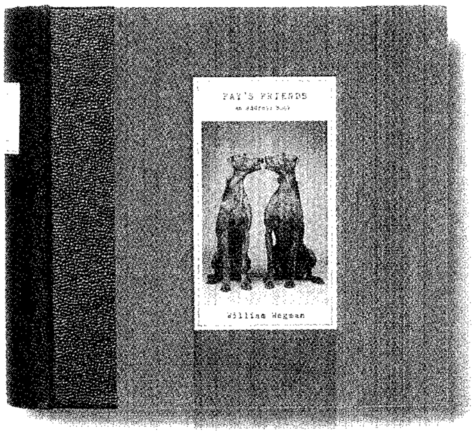
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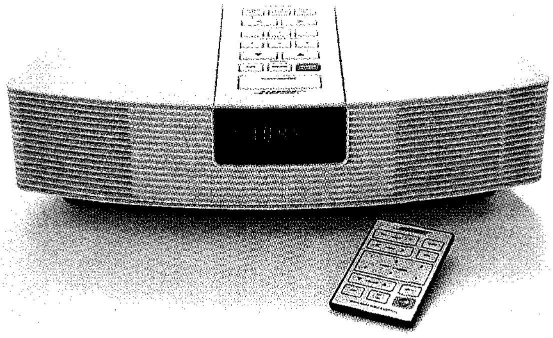

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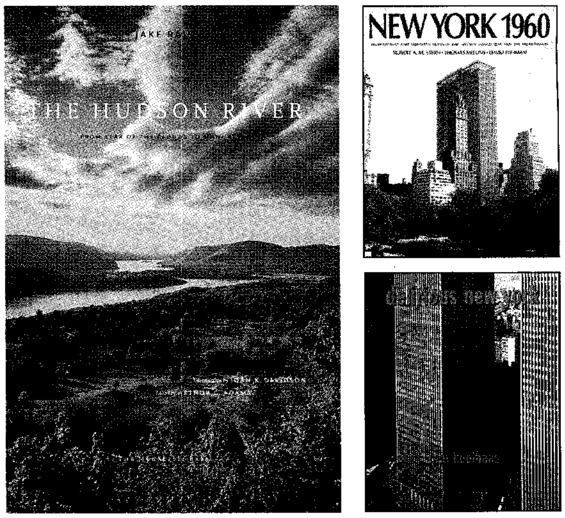
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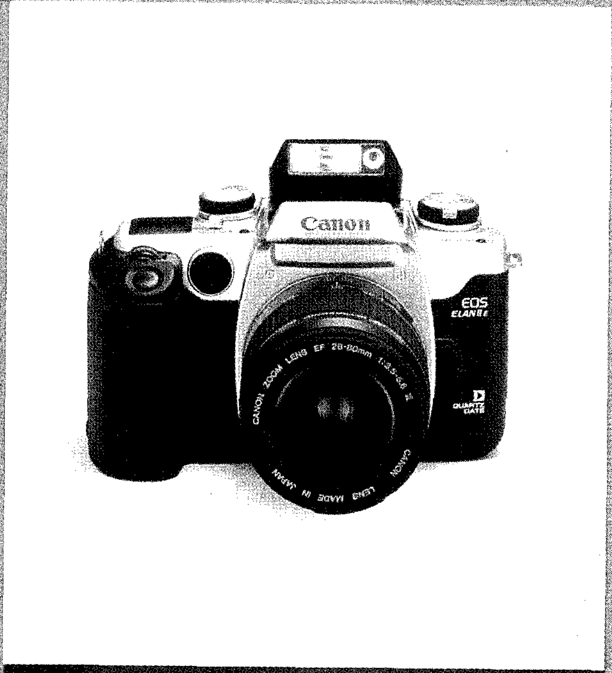

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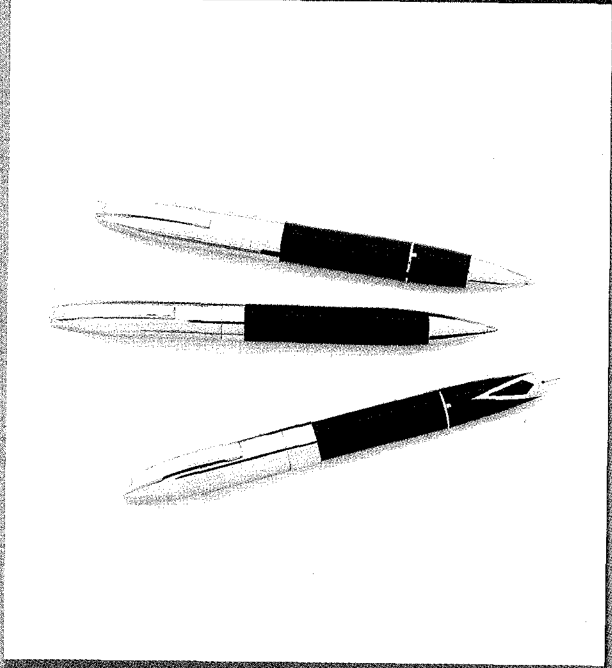

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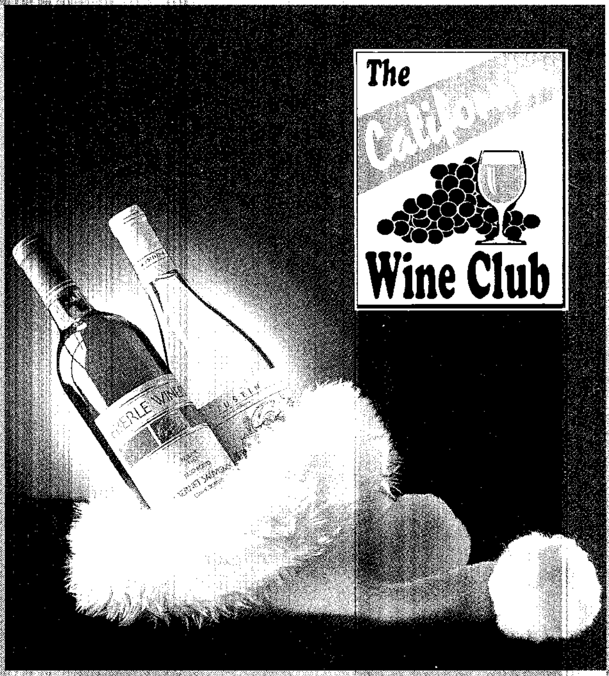

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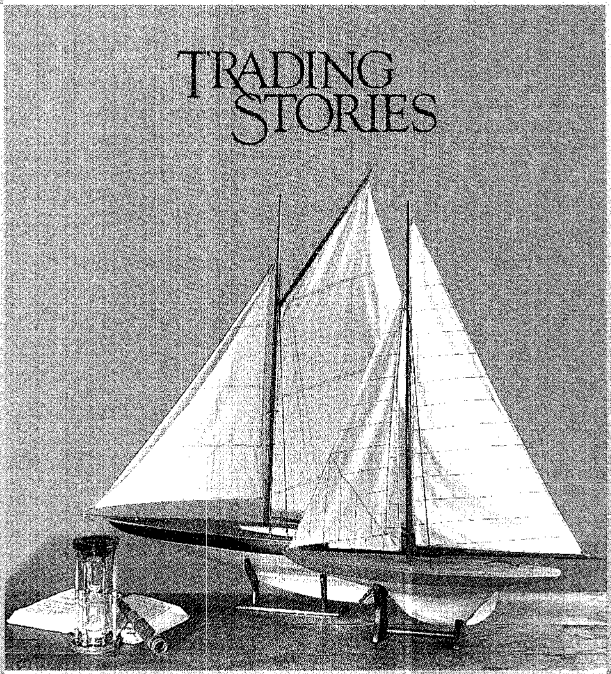

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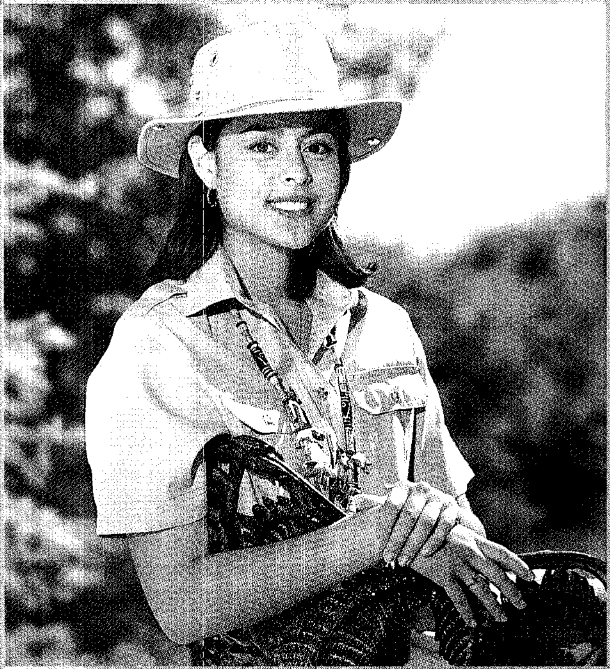

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mean political disaster for Southern blacks. "What we may see developing is a Democratic Party in the South that is largely black, very ineffectual, a party that is hardly important at all, and reduced to severe minority status," Bullock says. Earl Black, a leading authority on Southern politics, is even more blunt. "What is already happening throughout the South is a return of the rule of the white majority," he says.

On August 8, 1925, somewhere between twenty-five and forty-five thousand members of the Ku Klux Klan marched from the Capitol, down Pennsylvania Avenue, to the Washington Monument. Dr. A. H. Gulledge, of Columbus, Ohio, led the knights of the suddenly visible empire in prayer, and delivered the keynote address. He said that the Klan was not motivated, as its enemies had suggested, by racial or religious prejudice but merely concerned that "the races remain as God intended they should remain"—segregated. Gulledge finished with a grand promise: "Not until the sun shall hide his face, or the moon cease to shine, or God resigns his throne in the heavens, or until the white race becomes mongrelized will the Ku Klux Klan die. We will live on not to array one class against another, but to strive in all helpfulness to be of service to all in the spirit of Christ."

The event, which drew poor and working-class whites from all over the country, had stirred dire predictions of disorder. But with the Klan providing its own fez-topped security men to help keep the peace, the rally turned out to be entirely free of violence. The Washington *Star*, the voice of the establishment at the time, could not have been more approving. "The participants were drawn from every walk of life," the *Star* noted. "But all appeared deeply conscious of a great responsibility, to show to the world that the Ku Klux Klan is not ashamed of itself." The march, the *Star* declared, "will go down in their annals as perhaps the greatest day to date in the modern Ku Klux Klan." The *Star* was right, but not quite in the way it intended. August 8, 1925, turned out to be the Klan's last great day, the high-water mark of white supremacy in America.

On October 16, 1995, the nation's capital saw its first racially segregated mass demonstration since the Klan rally—the Million Man March, orga-

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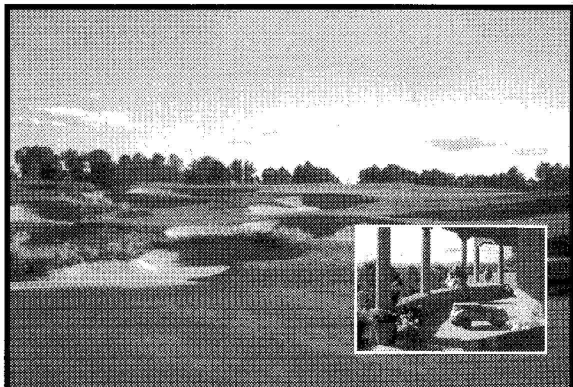

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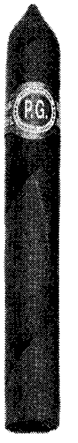

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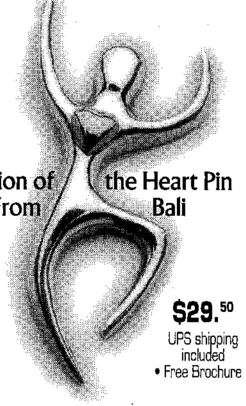

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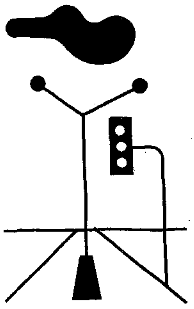
nized by the Nation of Islam and its leader, Louis Farrakhan. Like Gulledge, Farrakhan swore that he was inspired and directed by God, and he scorned those who said he was a bigot. Farrakhan said that God chose him as His messenger, but not "because my heart was dark with hatred and anti-Semitism . . . filled with hatred for white people." Like Gulledge, Farrakhan recognized a distinction between racism and his conviction that the races should not mix. "I don't need to be in any mainstream," he declared. "There is no way that we can integrate into white supremacy and hold our dignity as human beings, because if we integrate into that we've become subservient to that, and to become subservient to that is to make the slave master comfortable with his slave." And, like Gulledge, Farrakhan saw in the day's demonstration the promise of everlasting racial greatness. "White folks are having heart attacks today because their world is coming down," he said.



The men who marched on Washington in 1925 and in 1995 meant to show America the power of the idea of segregation—the power of standing unified and apart from the integrated muddle of democracy. The appeal of such an idea to any minority group is obvious. The poor and working-class whites of 1925 figured that in their separate oneness they could wield power far beyond their numbers and their wealth, and they believed that the people who ran the country would be properly impressed. But the people who ran the country then—like those who run the country now—tended to reward political minorities who wanted to stand alone by granting them their desire. The establishment permitted the Klan its wish to be excluded from the emerging, religiously and ethnically mixed, America, and that, inexorably, meant the end of the Klan's political power. The establishment will be happy to grant the new black segregationists their desire, too, and the new model of Southern politics—whites in their party and blacks in theirs, separate and vastly unequal—will then become the model for the nation.

It seems a lot to suggest that one person has—or had—the ability to reverse these trend lines of racial separatism, but some people who study race and politics for a living think Colin Powell could have done it. "It's a fascinating question—what would have happened if Colin Powell had run?" Hastings Wyman muses. "It would have created voting patterns that run counter to all these trends. A substantial number of blacks would have voted for Powell, and thus would have voted Republican." David Bositis figures that thirty to fifty per cent of black voters and perhaps eighty per cent of white Republicans would have voted for Powell. "It is true that there are numerous examples of whites telling pollsters they would vote for a black and then not, but there are not examples like that when the black is a Republican," Bositis notes. "And remember, the alternative would be Bill Clinton. Under those circumstances, I don't think there really would be that many white voters that would be put off by race."

The evidence suggests that Wyman and Bositis are not being fanciful. Given the right candidate, blacks do vote Republican. Ohio's Republican Governor George Voinovich, who had earned a reputation for fairness among blacks, pulled forty per cent of black voters in his 1994 reëlection campaign. And, given the right candidate, whites do vote black. Last year, J. C. Watts and Gary Franks, conservative black Republicans, won congressional seats from overwhelmingly white districts in Oklahoma and Connecticut.

Bositis argues that crossover voting on a scale that a Powell candidacy would have inspired would have produced profound changes in the racial climate of our national politics. He envisions a political universe reconfigured by the signal event of a black Republican running a credible Presidential campaign: a Democratic Party forced to rediscover its identity as the party of the working class, and a Republican Party drawing a solid twenty to thirty per cent of the black vote, abandoning its long-standing use of racial appeals. The one-party South would disappear. Neither Republicans nor Democrats would be able to control a region where both races crossed party lines routinely. A Powell candidacy could have been the beginning of the first era of true integration that American politics has ever seen. ♦

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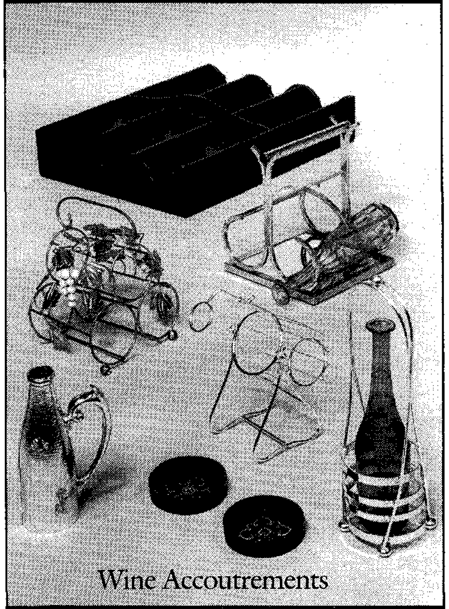

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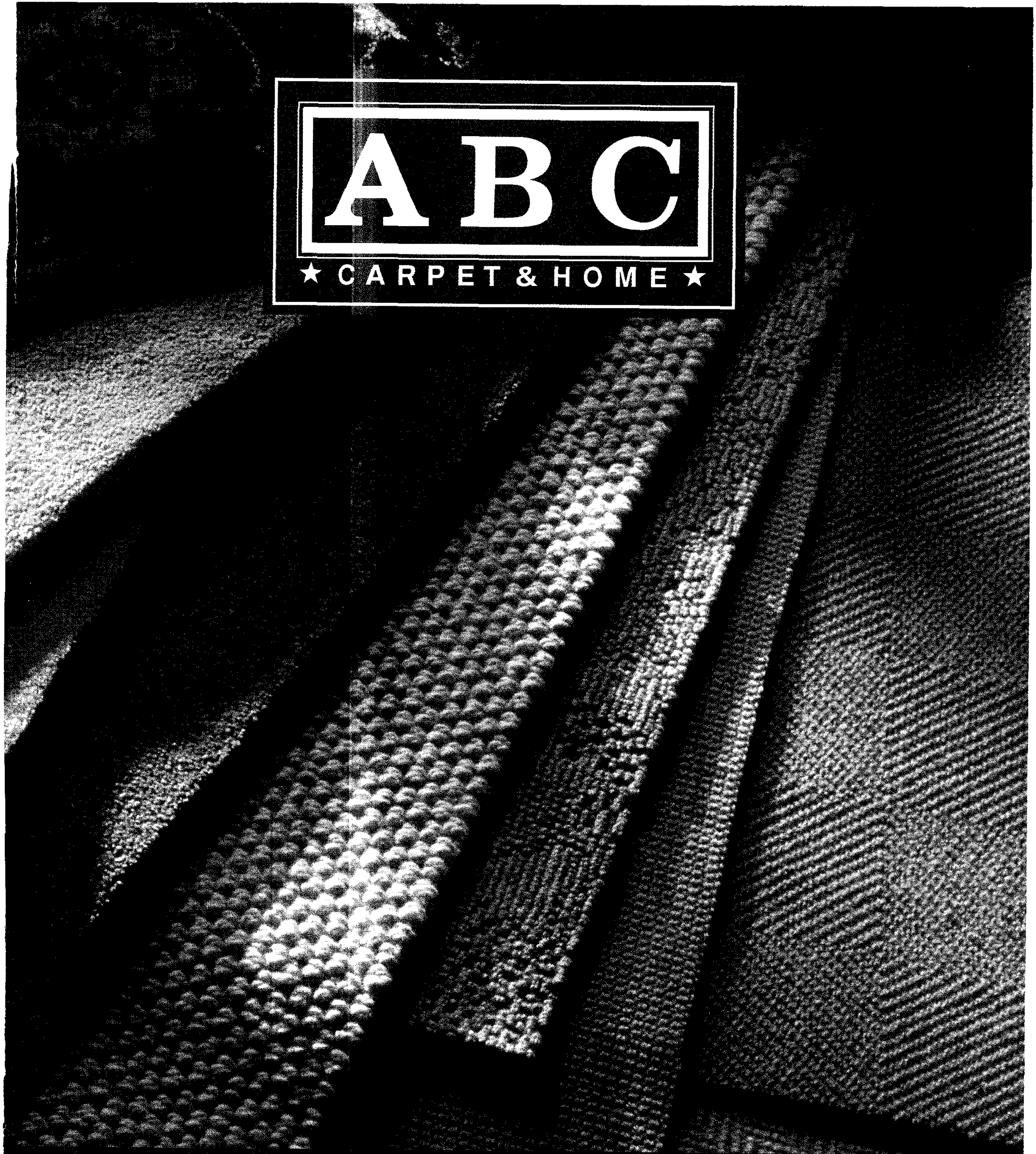

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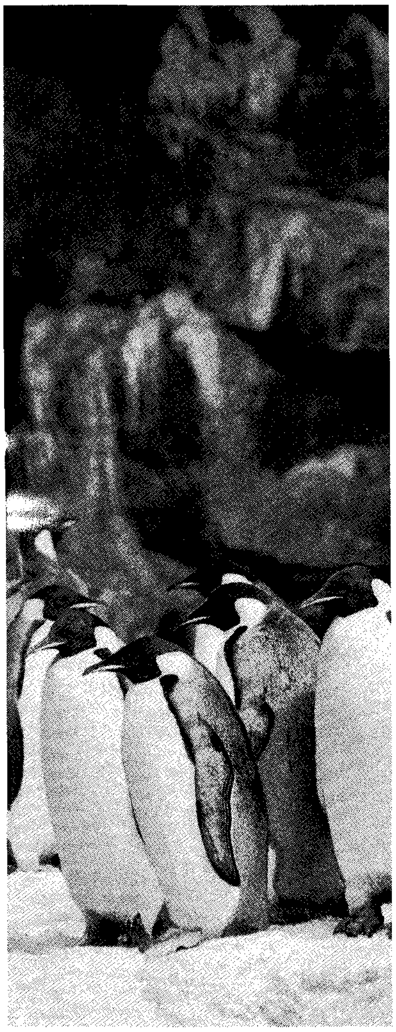

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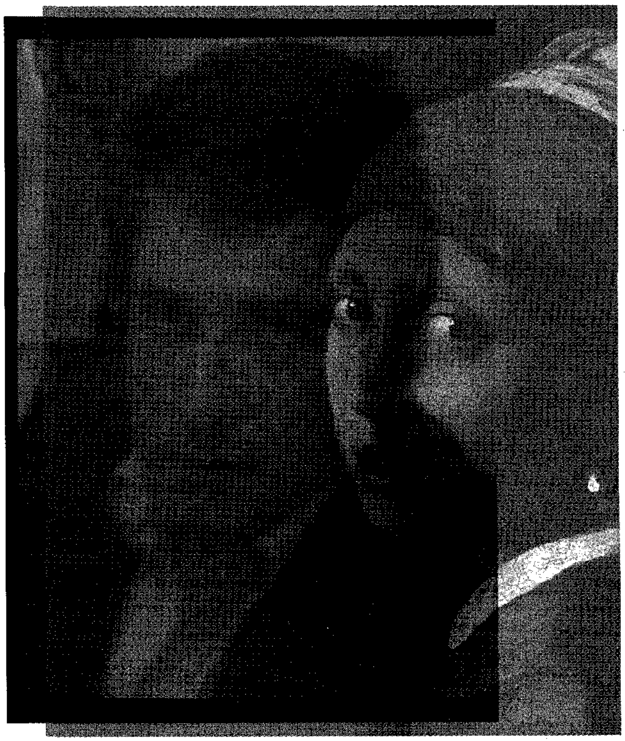
INVENTING PEACE

What can Vermeer teach us about Bosnia? A three-hundred-year-old lesson about fashioning order in a world of chaos.

BY LAWRENCE WESCHLER

I WAS in The Hague several weeks ago, sitting in on the preliminary hearings of the Yugoslav War Crimes Tribunal—specifically, those related to the case of Dusko Tadic, the only one of more than forty accused war criminals whom the Tribunal has actually been able to get its hands on (the main portion of Tadic's trial will be getting under way sometime in the months ahead). While there, I talked with some of the principal figures involved in this unprecedented judicial undertaking.

At one point, I was having lunch with Antonio Cassese, a distinguished Italian jurist who has been serving for the past two years as the president of the court (the head of its international panel of eleven judges). He was rehearsing for me some of the more gruesome stories that have crossed his desk—maybe not the most gruesome but just the sort of thing he has to contend with every day and which perhaps accounts for the sense of urgency he brings to his mission. The story, for instance, of a soccer player. As Cassese recounted, “Famous guy, a Muslim. When he was captured, they said, ‘Aren't you So-and-So?’ He admitted he was. So they broke both his legs, handcuffed him to a radiator, and forced him to watch as they repeatedly raped his wife and two daughters and then slit their throats. After that, he begged to be killed himself, but his tormentors must have realized that the cruellest thing they could possibly do to him now would simply be to set him free, which they did. Somehow, this man was able to make his way to some U.N. investigators, and told them about his ordeal—a few days after which, he committed suicide.” Or, for instance, as Cassese went on, “some of the tales about Tadic himself, how, in addition to the various rapes and murders he's accused of, he is alleged to have supervised the torture and torments of a particular group of Muslim prisoners, at one point forcing one of his charges to emasculate another—*with his teeth*. The one fellow died, and the guy who bit him went mad.”



Dusko Tadic, in the video monitor at the war-crimes hearings in The Hague, and Vermeer's 1666 “Head of a Young Girl.”

TADIC: COURT TV; VERMEER: SCALA / ART RESOURCE, NY

Stories like that: one judge's daily fare. I asked Judge Cassese how, regularly obliged to gaze into such an appalling abyss, he had kept from going mad himself. His face brightened. "Ah," he said with a smile. "You see, as often as possible I make my way over to the Mauritshuis museum, in the center of town, so as to spend a little time with the Vermeers."

FOR the next few months, Judge Cassese will have to find some other form of surcease. All the Mauritshuis's Vermeers, along with a majority of all other extant Vermeers—twenty-one out of a total of thirty-five pictures attributed to the incomparable Dutch master, gleaned from museums all over the world—will be at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., from November 12th to next February: another unprecedented event, and one that may prove to be among the most memorable exhibitions of our generation. Next spring, on the other hand, should prove a bit easier for Judge Cassese, as the entire exhibition will arrive back at the Mauritshuis (March 1st to June 2nd). Washington and The Hague will constitute the show's only two venues, and in all likelihood nothing anywhere nearly as ambitious, in terms of Vermeer, will ever be attempted again.

Sitting there over lunch with Cassese, I'd been struck by the perfect aptness of his impulse. I, too, had been spending time with the Vermeers at the Mauritshuis, and at the Rijksmuseum, in Amsterdam, as well. For Vermeer's paintings, almost uniquely in the history of art, radiate "a centeredness, a peacefulness, a serenity" (as Cassese put it), a sufficiency, a sense of perfectly equipoised grace. In his exquisite "Study of Vermeer," Edward Snow has deployed as an epigraph a line from Andrew Forge's essay "Painting and the Struggle for the Whole Self," which reads, "In ways that I do not pretend to understand fully, painting deals with the only issues that seem to me to count in our benighted time—freedom, autonomy, fairness, love." I've often found myself agreeing with Snow's implication that somehow these issues may be more richly and fully addressed in Vermeer than anywhere else.

But that afternoon with Cassese I had a sudden further intuition as to the true extent of Vermeer's achievement—something I hadn't fully recognized before. For, of course, when Vermeer was painting those images, which for us have become the very emblem of peacefulness and serenity, *all Europe was Bosnia* (or had only just been): awash in incredibly vicious wars of religious persecution and proto-nationalist formation. To be sure, the sense of Holland during Vermeer's lifetime which we are usually given—that of the country's so-called Golden Age—is one of becalmed, burgherlike efficiency; but that Holland, to the extent that it ever existed, was of relatively recent provenance, and even then under the continual threat of being overwhelmed once again.

Johannes Vermeer was born in 1632, sixteen years before the end of the Thirty Years' War, which virtually shredded neighboring Germany and repeatedly tore into the Netherlands as well. Between 1652 and 1674, England and the United Provinces of the Netherlands went to war three times, and though most of the fighting was confined to sea battles, the wars were not without their consequences for the Dutch mainland: Vermeer's Delft, in particular, suffered terrible devastation in 1654, when some eighty thousand pounds of gunpowder in the town's arsenal accidentally exploded, killing hundreds, including Vermeer's great contemporary the painter Carel Fabritius. (By the conclusion of those wars, the Dutch ended up ceding New Amsterdam to the British, who quickly changed its name to New York.) These were years of terrible religious conflict throughout Europe—the climaxes of both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation and their various splintering progeny. And though the Dutch achieved an enviable atmosphere of tolerance during this period, Holland was regularly overrun with refugees from religious conflicts elsewhere. (Vermeer himself, incidentally, was a convert to Catholicism, which was a distinctly minority creed in the Dutch context.) Finally, in 1672, the Dutch fell under the murderous assault of France's Louis XIV, and were subjected to a series of campaigns that lasted until 1678. In fact, the ensuing devastation of the Dutch economy and Vermeer's own resulting bankruptcy may have constituted a proximate cause of the painter's early

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death, by stroke, in 1675: he was only forty-two.

ANOTHER preliminary session of the Tribunal was scheduled for late in the afternoon of the day I had lunch with Judge Cassese, and, following our conversation, I decided to spend the intervening hours at the Mauritshuis. On the taxi ride out, as I looked through a Vermeer catalogue, I began to realize that, in fact, the pressure of all that violence (remembered, imagined, foreseen) is what those paintings are all about. Of course, not directly: The literary critic Harry Berger, in his essays on Vermeer, frequently invokes the notion of "conspicuous exclusion," of themes that are saturatingly present but only as *felt absence*—themes that are being held at bay, but conspicuously so. It's almost as if Vermeer can be seen, amid the horrors of his age, to have been asserting or *inventing* the very idea of peace. But Hobbes's state of nature, or state of war (Hobbes: 1588-1679; Vermeer: 1632-75), is everywhere adumbrated around the edges of Vermeer's achievement. That's what the roaring lions carved into the chair posts are all about—those and also the maps on the wall. The maps generally portray the Netherlands, but the whole point is that during Vermeer's lifetime the political and geographic dispensation of the Netherlands, the distribution of its Protestants and Catholics, the grim legacy of its only just recently departed Spanish overlords, and the still current threats posed by its English and French neighbors—all these matters were still actively, and sometimes bloodily, being contested. When soldiers visit young girls in Vermeer's paintings, where does one think they have been off soldiering—and why, one wonders, does the country need all those civic guards? When pregnant young women are standing still, bathed in the window light, intently reading their letters, where is one invited to imagine the letters are coming from?

Or consider the magisterial "View of Delft"—as I now did, having arrived at the Mauritshuis and taken a seat before the magnificent canvas up on the second floor. It is an image of unalloyed civic peace and quiet. But it is also the image of a town only just emerging from a downpour, the earth in the foreground still saturated with moisture, the walls of the town bejewelled with wet, the dark clouds breaking up at last, and the sunlight breaking through, though not just anywhere: a shaft of fresh, clean light gets lavished on one spire in particular, that of the radiantly blond Nieuwe Kerk, in whose interior, as any contemporary of Vermeer's would doubtless have known, stands the mausoleum of William the Silent, one of the heroes of the wars of Dutch independence, assassinated in Delft at the end of the previous century by a French Catholic fanatic.

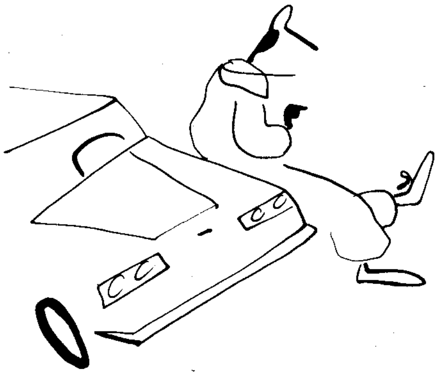
For some reason, I was reminded of a cautionary comment made to a group of us well over twenty-five years ago—in the midst of some frenzied political crisis or other—by a medieval historian visiting from England. Observing our hyperventilating excitement, this fellow calmly cited the story of Jesus on the waters (Matthew 8:23-27), going on to note sardonically how it had always seemed to him that the point of the story was that in moments of crisis one mustn't allow the storm to enter oneself but should, instead, find peace inside oneself and then breathe it out.

And it now seemed to me, sitting among the Vermeers that afternoon at the Mauritshuis, that that was precisely what the Master of Delft had been about in his life's work: at a tremendously turbulent juncture in the history of his continent, he had been finding—and, yes, inventing—a zone filled with peace, a small room, an intimate vision . . . and then breathing it out.

IT'S one of the great things about great works of art that they can bear—and, indeed, that they invite—a superplenitude of possible readings, some of them contradictory. One of the most idiosyncratic responses to Vermeer I have ever encountered was that of the Afrikaner poet and painter Breyten Breytenbach during a walk we took one morning through the galleries of New York's Metropolitan Museum. Breytenbach, who was a clandestine anti-apartheid activist, had only recently emerged from seven years of incarceration in the monotone dungeons of the apartheid regime, and most of his comments that morning had to do with the lusciousness of all the colors in the paintings we were passing. For the most part, though, we were silent, moving at a fairly even pace from room to room—that is, until we came to Vermeer's painting of the young girl in the deep-blue skirt standing by a window, her hand poised on a silver pitcher, the window light spreading evenly across a map on the wall behind her. Here Breytenbach stopped cold for many moments, utterly absorbed. "Huh," he said finally, pointing to the gallery's caption giving the date of the painting: circa 1664-65. "It's hard to believe how from all that serenity emerge the *Boere*. Look." He jabbed a finger at the little boats delicately daubed on the painted map's painted coastline. "*That's them leaving right now!*" (And, indeed, Cape Town had been founded by the Dutch East India Company only a decade earlier, and would soon start filling up with some of the Huguenots who had flooded into Holland following a fresh upsurge of repression back in France.)

Edward Snow, for his part, makes quite a convincing case that Vermeer's art is above all about sexuality and as such provides one of the most profound explorations of the wellsprings of the erotic in the entire Western tradition. It is about female reserve and autonomy and self-sufficiency in the face of the male gaze, Snow suggests, or even in the seeming absence of such a gaze.

In this context, the pièce de résistance in his argument is a brilliantly sustained twenty-page close reading of Vermeer's magnificent (though uncannily diminutive) "Head of a Young Girl"—sometimes referred to, alternatively, as "The Girl in a Turban" or "The Girl with a Pearl" (at the Mauritshuis, it happens to face "The View of Delft," just across the room). Snow's approach to this overexposed and by now almost depleted image is to ask, Has the girl just turned



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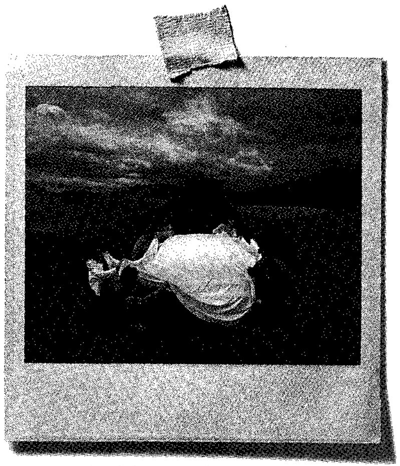

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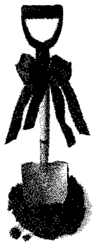

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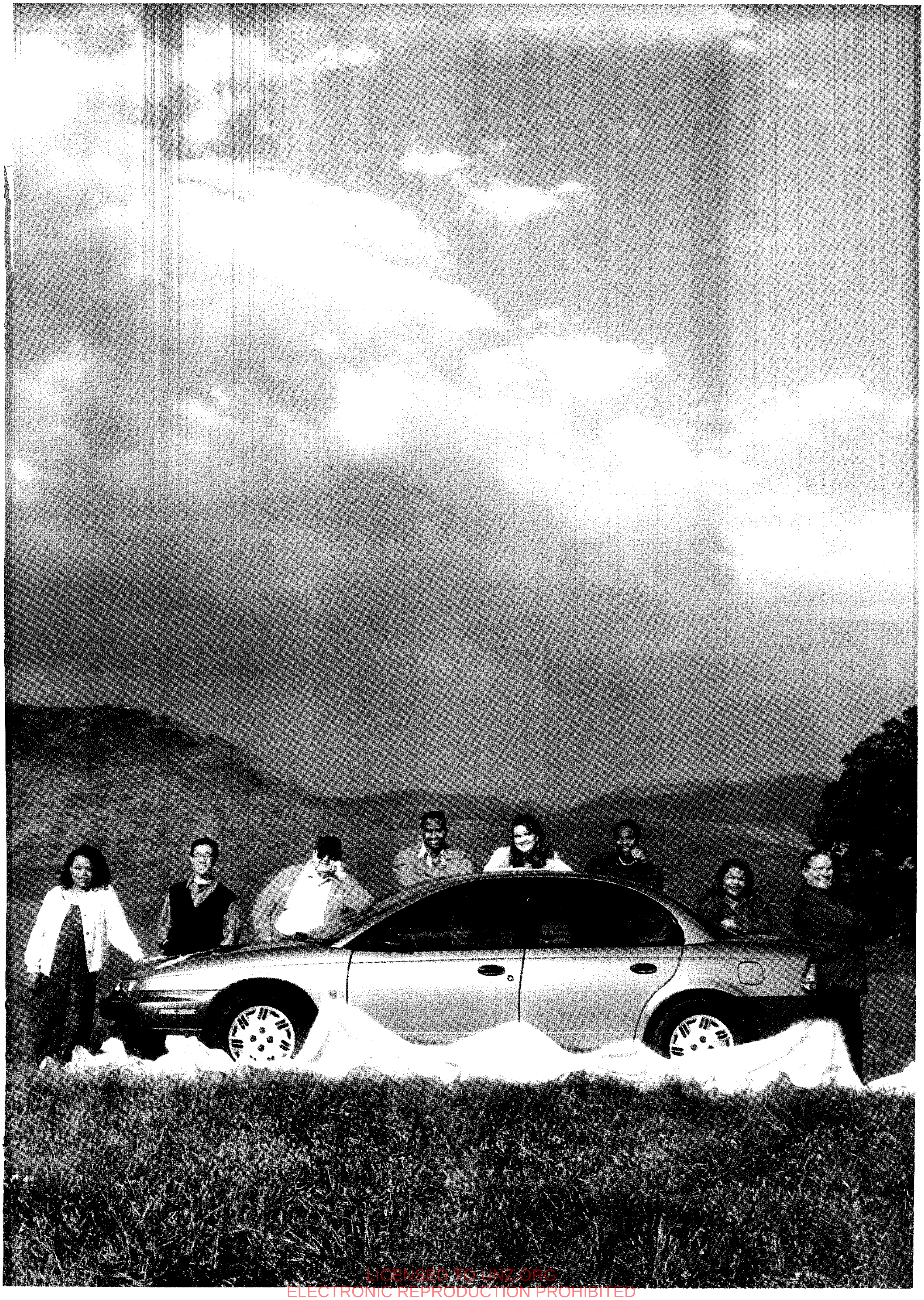

toward us or is she just about to turn away? Looked at with this question in mind, it does seem that such immanence, one way or the other, is of its essence. As Snow points out, if we momentarily blot out the face itself, everything else conspires to make us expect a simple profile of a head—so that afterward, as we allow ourselves to look again on the face unobstructed, the girl does seem to have only just now turned to face us. But if we look for a moment at the pendant of cloth cascading down from the knot at the top of her turban, it seems at first as if that pendant ought to fall behind her far shoulder; in fact it falls far forward, provoking a visual torsion precisely opposite to that of the one we'd surmised earlier: no, on second thought, she seems to be pulling away. The answer is that she's actually doing both. This is a woman who has just turned toward us and is already about to look away: and the melancholy of the moment, with its impending sense of loss, is transferred from her eyes to the tearlike pearl dangling from her ear. It's an entire movie in a single frozen image.

The girl's lips are parted in a sudden intake of breath—much, we suddenly notice, as are our own as we gaze back upon her. And in fact an astonishing transmutation has occurred. In the moment of painting, it was Vermeer who'd been looking at the girl and registering the imminent turning-away of her attention (the speculation among some critics that Vermeer's model for this image may have been his daughter renders the conceit all the more poignant); subsequently, it was, of course, the painted image that would stay frozen in time, eternally attentive, while it was he as artist who'd eventually be the one turning away; and, still later, it would be Vermeer himself who, through the girl's gaze, would remain faithful, whereas it would be we viewers, casually wandering through the museum and tarrying before the image for a few, breath-inheld moments, who would be the ones eventually turning away. "The Head of a Young Girl" thus becomes a picture about presence and eternity, or, at any rate, posterity.

For many years, Vermeer's works were seen primarily as instances of the various types of moralizing genre imagery then current in the Netherlands—superb examples of which grace the walls of some of the adjoining rooms there at the Mauritshuis. The Metropolitan's "Girl Asleep" was thus cast as yet another castigating allegory of feminine sloth and drunkenness, while Berlin's "Woman Putting on Pearls" was folded into the tradition of vanity motifs. The Frick's "Officer and Laughing Girl" was assigned to the tradition of vaguely unsavory prostitution images (as, naturally, was Dresden's "Procuress," from earlier in Vermeer's career); conversely, the Louvre's "Lacemaker" was seen in the context of more positively tinged illustrations of industriousness, and the Rijksmuseum's "Milkmaid" was cast as yet another prototypically Dutch celebration of the domestic virtues. All of which misses the essential point, because in each of these instances and in virtually every other one of his paintings Vermeer deploys the conventional iconography precisely so as to upend it. No, his paintings all but cry out, this person is not to be seen as merely a type, a trope, an allegory. If she is standing in for anything, she is standing in for the condition of being a unique individual human being, worthy of our own unique individual response. (Which is more than can be said, generally, for the men in Vermeer's paintings, who do seem, hovering there beside the women, to stand in for the condition of being somewhat oafishly de trop.)

Or so, anyway, I found myself thinking in the taxi as I returned to the Tribunal—of that and of the way in which the entire Yugoslavian debacle has been taking place in a context wherein the Other, even one's own neighbor, is suddenly being experienced no longer as a subject like oneself but as an instance, a type, a vile expletive: a Serb, a Croat, a Turk, and, as such, preordained for an ages-old, inevitable fate. (Note that such a construction has to be as assiduously "invented" as its obverse: people who've been living in relative peace for decades have to be goaded into seeing one another, once again, in this manner.) No wonder that Cassese flees to Vermeer for surcease.

A Dutch journalist named Alfred van Cleef recently published a remarkable book, "De Verloren Wereld van de Familie Berberovic" ("The Lost World of the Berberovic Family"), in which he traces the downward spiral of the last five years in Yugoslavia through the shattered prism of one Bosnian family's experience. Early in his narrative, he recounts how the war came to the Berberovic family's village, how for many months its members had been picking up the increasingly strident harangues welling out from the Belgrade and Zagreb television stations but hadn't

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When the light poured down through a hole in the clouds,
We knew the great poet was going to show. And he did.
A limousine with all white tires and stained-glass windows
Dropped him off. And then, with a clear and soundless fluency,
He strode into the hall. There was a hush. His wings were big.
The cut of his suit, the width of his tie were out of date.
When he spoke, the air seemed whitened by imagined cries.
The worm of desire bore into the heart of everyone there.
There were tears in their eyes. The great one was better than ever.
"No need to rush," he said at the close of the reading. "The end
Of the world is only the end of the world as you know it."
How like him, everyone thought. Then he was gone,
And the world was a blank. It was cold and the air was still.
Tell me, you people out there, what is poetry, anyway?
Can anyone die without even a little?

—Mark Strand

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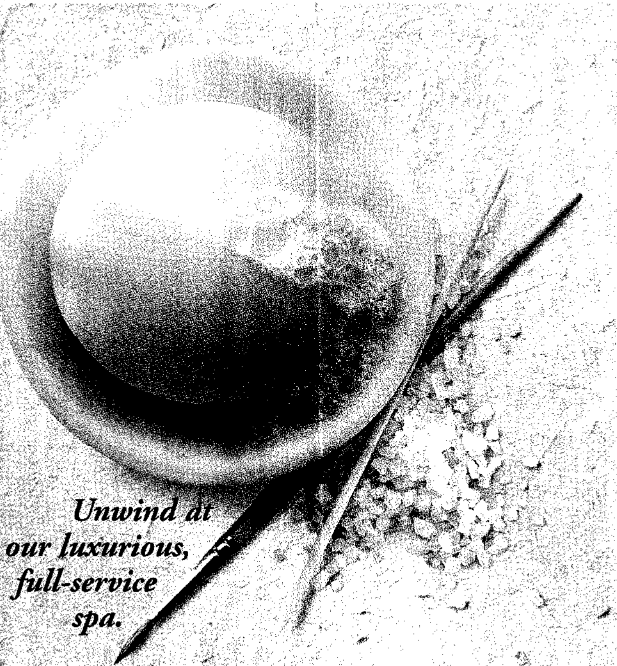

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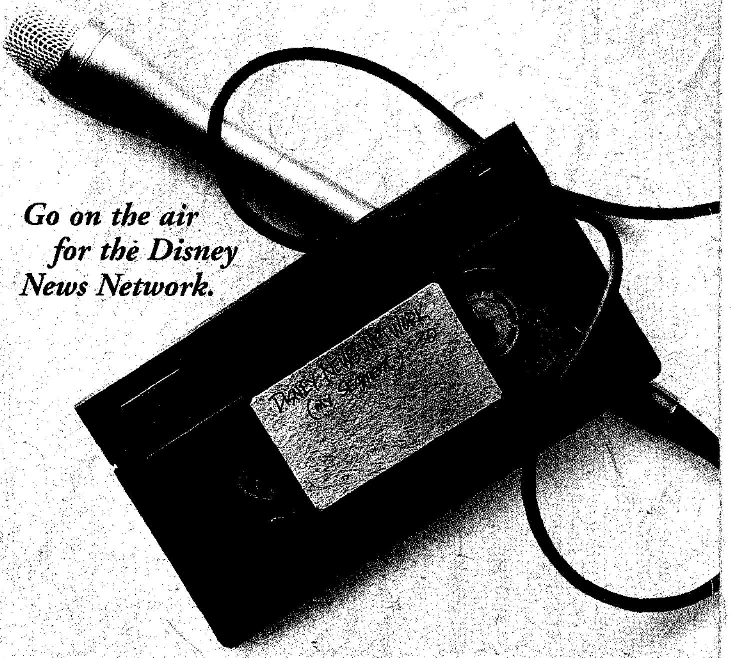

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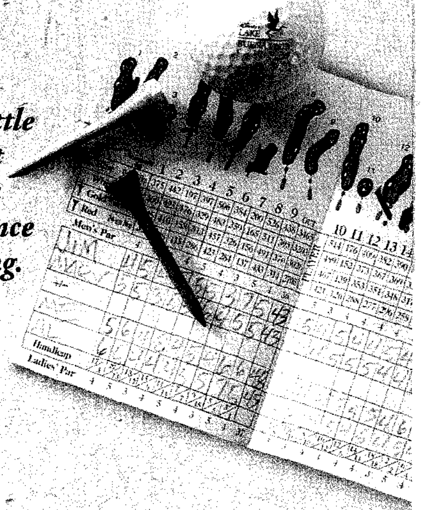

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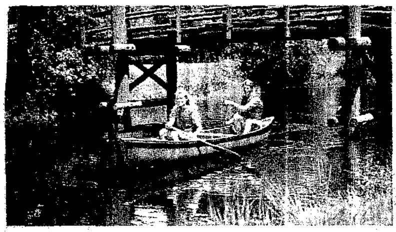

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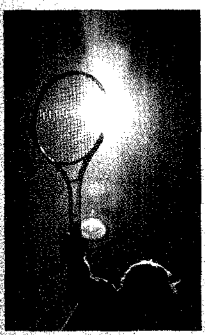

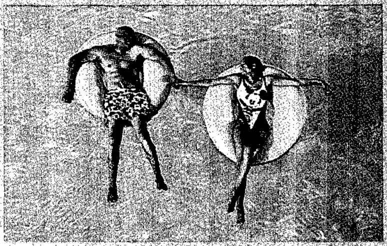

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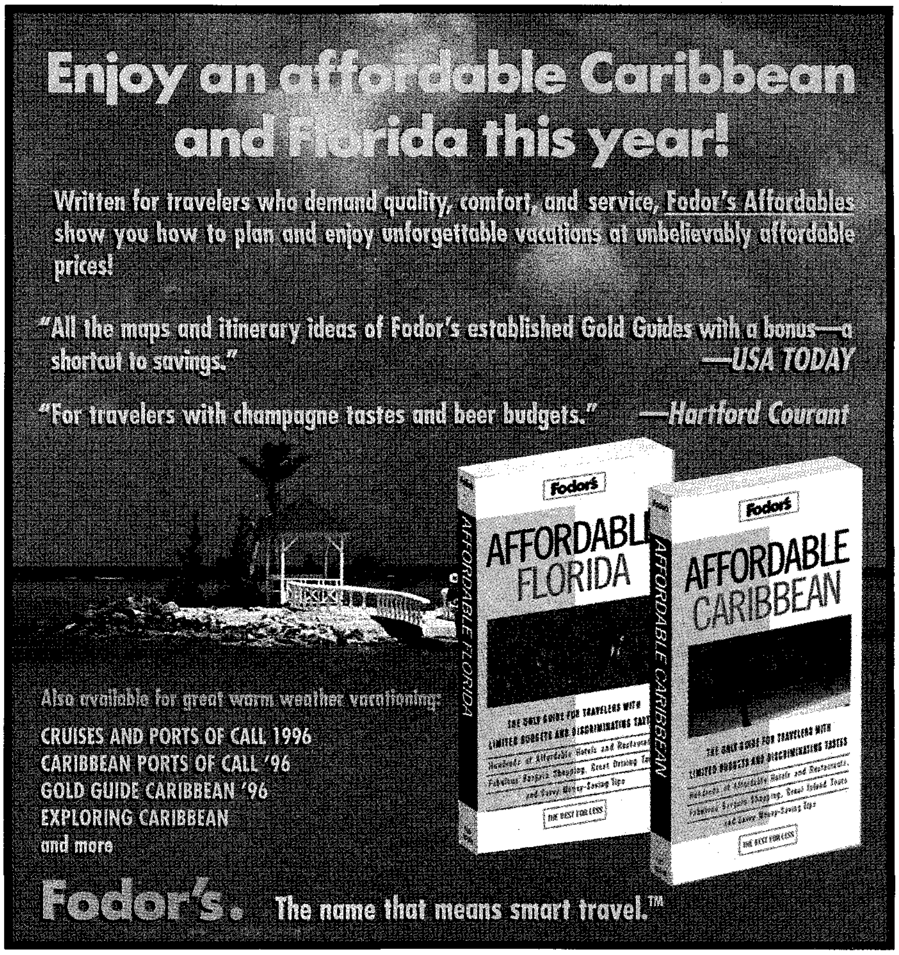
worried because theirs was a peaceful village, where Serbs and Croats and Muslims lived equably together, with a high degree of intermarriage, and so forth. Then the war was just two valleys over, but still they didn't worry, and then it was in the very next valley, but, even so, no one could imagine its actually intruding into their quiet lives. But one day a car suddenly careered into the village's central square, four young men in militia uniforms leaping out, purposefully crossing the square, seeming to single out a particular house and cornering its occupant, whereupon the leader of the militiamen calmly levelled a gun at the young man and blew him away. The militiamen hustled back to their car and sped off. As van Cleef subsequently recounted the incident for me, "They left behind them a village almost evenly divided. Those under fifty years of age had been horrified by the seeming randomness of the act, while those over fifty realized, with perhaps even greater horror, that the young man who'd just been killed was the son of a man who, back during the partisan struggles of the Second World War, happened to have killed the uncle of the kid who'd just done the killing. And the older villagers immediately realized, with absolute clarity, that if this was now possible everything was going to be possible."

Yugoslavia today has been turned back into one of those places where people not only seem incapable of forgetting the past but barely seem capable of thinking about anything else: the Serbs and Croats and Muslims now appear to be so deeply mired in a poisonous legacy of grievances, extending back fifty years, a hundred years—indeed, all the way back to the fourteenth century—that it's almost as if the living had been transformed into pale, wraithlike shades haunting the ghosts of the long-dead rather than the other way around.

Which is to say that we're back in the moral universe of epic poetry: the Iliad, Beowulf, the Chanson de Roland, the Mahabharata, and, of course, "Finnegans Wake"—a modernist recasting of the entire epic tradition, composed during the thirties by James Joyce, who once characterized history as "two bloody Irishmen in a bloody fight over bloody nothing." Not so much over bloody nothing, per-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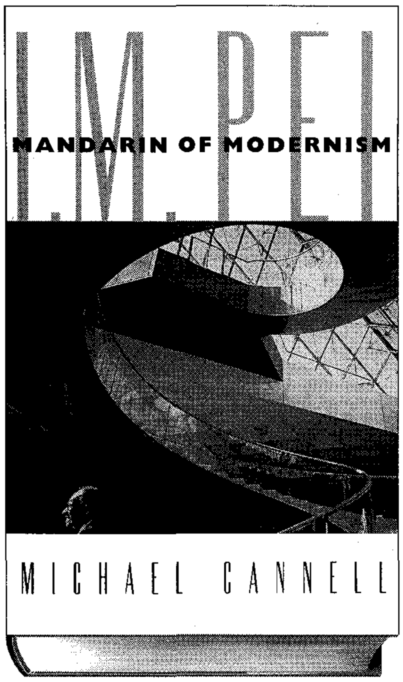

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haps, as vengeance for vengeance for vengeance for who-any-longer-knows-what? That's the heart of the epic tradition: those twinned themes of the relentless maw of vengeance and the ludicrous incommensurability of its first causes recur time and again, from one culture to the next. It's worth remembering how, also during the thirties, when the great Harvard classicist Milman Parry was trying to crack the Homeric code—to determine just how the ancient Greek bards were able to improvise such incredibly long poems, and what mnemonic devices they had devised to assist them—he scoured the world for places where such oral epic traditions were still alive, and the place he finally settled on as perfect for his purposes was Yugoslavia.

Vermeer was not a painter in the epic tradition: on the contrary, his life's work can be seen, within its historical moment, as a heroic, extended attempt to steer his (and his viewers') way clear of such a depersonalizing approach to experiencing one's fellow human beings. It was a project, I now realized, as I took my seat in the visitors' gallery facing the Tribunal's glassed-in hearing room, not all that dissimilar from that of the Tribunal itself.

The day before, I'd spoken with Richard Goldstone, the eminent South African jurist who has been serving as the Yugoslav Tribunal's lead prosecutor. (He is serving the same role on the Tribunal that has been established to prosecute the war criminals in Rwanda.) I'd asked him how he envisioned the mission of the Tribunal, and he'd described it as nothing less than a breaking of the historic cycle of vengeance-inspired ethnic mayhem. He does not believe in the inevitability of such violence. "For the great majority of their histories, the Croats and Serbs and Muslims, and the Tutsis and Hutus, have lived in relative peace with one another—and they were all doing that relatively nicely once again until just recently," he told me. "Such interethnic violence usually gets stoked by specific individuals intent on immediate political or material advantage, who then call forth the legacies of earlier and previously unaddressed grievances. But the guilt for the violence that results does not adhere to the entire group. Specific individuals bear the major share of the responsibility, and it is they, not the group as a whole, who need to be held to account, through a fair and meticulously detailed presentation and evaluation of evidence, precisely so that the next time around no one will be able to claim that all Serbs did this, or all Croats or all Hutus—so that people are able to see how it is specific individuals in their communities who are continually endeavoring to manipulate them in that fashion. I really believe that this is the only way the cycle can be broken."

The preliminary hearings now resumed. Tadic was seated in a sort of aquarium of bulletproof glass, a panoply of high-tech gadgetry arrayed all around him and around the various lawyers and judges: instantaneous-translation devices, video cameras and monitors, computerized evidence screens, and so forth.

Inventing peace: I found myself thinking of Vermeer with his camera obscura—an empty box fronted by a lens through which the chaos of the world might be drawn in and tamed back to a kind of sublime order. And I found myself thinking of these people here with their legal chamber, the improbably calm site for a similar effort at transmutation.

I looked up at the TV monitor: the automated camera was evidently scanning the room. It caught the prosecutors in their flowing robes shuffling papers, the judges, the defense table, and now Tadic himself. The camera lingered on him—a handsome young man, improbably dapper in a navy-blue jacket and a gleaming white T-shirt—and then zeroed in for a closer shot of his face.

There he was, not some symbol or trope or a stand-in for anybody other than himself: a quite specific individual, in all his sublime self-sufficiency; a man of whom, as it happened, terrible, terrible allegations had been made, and who was now going to have to face those allegations, stripped of any rationales except his own autonomous free agency.

For a startling split second, he looked up at the camera. And then he looked away. ♦

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HAMLET IN HOLLYWOOD

What was Shakespeare really thinking when he wrote "Hamlet"? And how did a producer, a tutor, and Hollywood lawyers get involved?

BY DAVID REMNICK

ILLUSTRATION BY EDWARD SOREL

IT was a broiling morning in late August, a day so hot that all the palms and Freon in Bel Air could not cool it. There was no telling what tensions had come to overflow inside the gated mansions off Sunset, but it is a fair surmise that the heat was most intense at Bob Newhart's old place on Strada Corta, now the home of Steve Sohmer, a writer and independent producer who was once the president and chief operating officer of Columbia Pictures. A thickset, balding man of fifty-three, Sohmer sat in his back-yard office and glared across his desk at a young Shakespeare scholar from Boston University named Mary Ann McGrail. Sohmer felt deceived, betrayed. McGrail, in his eyes, was laying claim to his "intellectual property." More specifically, she was laying claim to his theory of "Hamlet"—a theory that the life of Martin Luther is the hidden source of the play—and he would not allow it. Sohmer had won a battle over writing credits for the NBC miniseries "Tom Clancy's Op Center" just a few months before. Did she doubt he would fight this, too?

In middle age, Sohmer had revived a long-standing interest in Shakespeare, and in 1992, to help him pursue that interest, he hired a tutor, Mary Ann McGrail. Their arrangement was friendly and simple: Sohmer flew McGrail out from Boston to Los Angeles and paid her a hundred dollars an hour—plus, in the fourth summer, a thousand dollars a month for expenses. They met every weekday morning for two hours at the Bel Air estate. For four summers running, there had been no clash between their two worlds—between Hollywood and the academy. Instead, Sohmer and McGrail intersected at a common passion: the plays of Shakespeare.

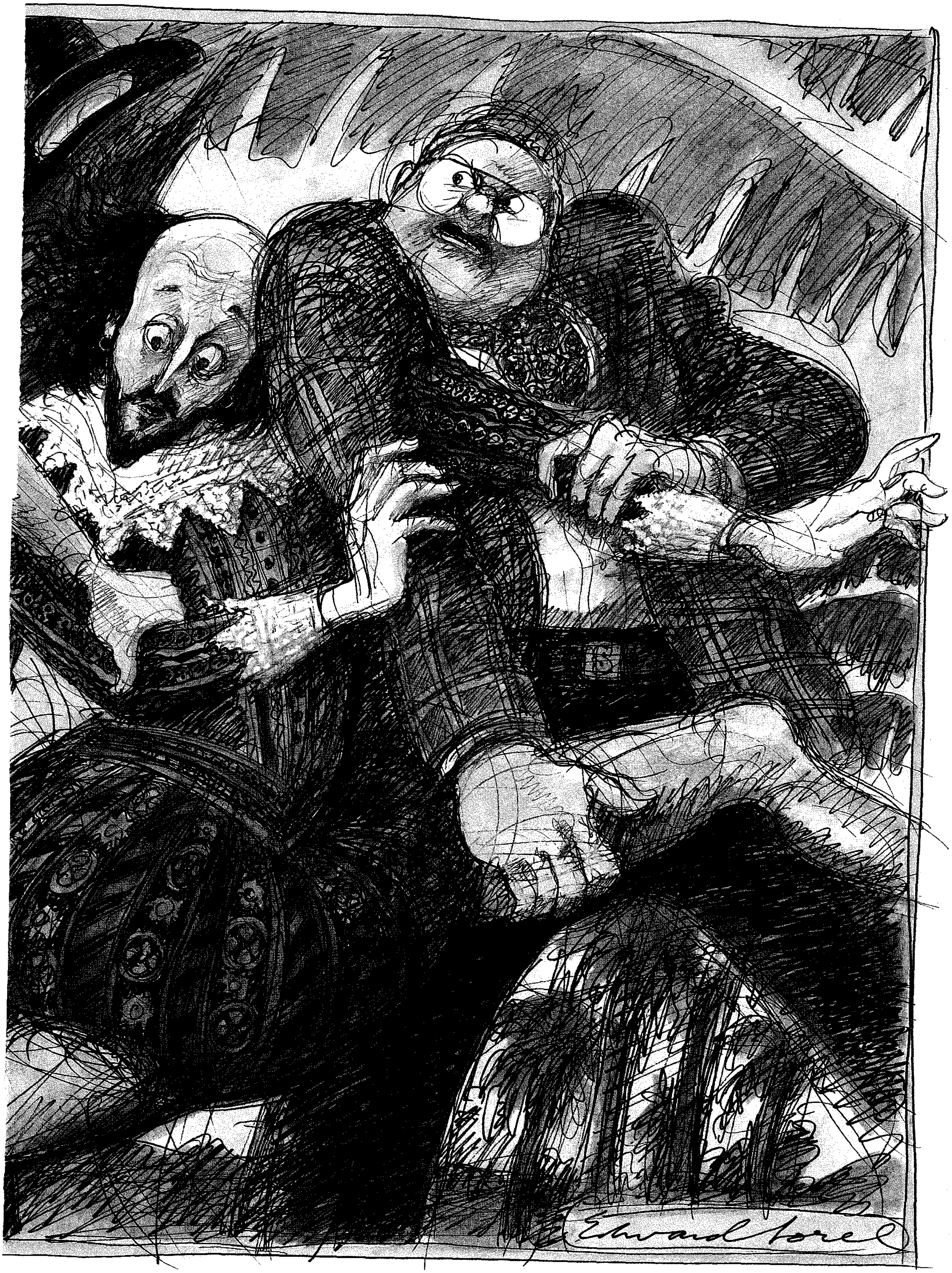
But now, in his anger, Sohmer no longer cared to play the role of the passionate amateur scholar; he became once more the studio head, the proprietor. McGrail had suggested that they could publish companion articles, he on the part of the theory that was his, and she on what was hers. The *Times Literary Supplement*, in London, might be interested in publishing both. But Sohmer would not accept the arrangement; both names would have to appear on both pieces. He also wanted to collaborate on a book; he'd give her "top billing"—that was the phrase he used. McGrail wanted to work on her own.

In court documents, McGrail claims that Sohmer told her, "If you fuck with me on this, you will regret it. What's in the past will be irrelevant. And you'll be in a very, very unpleasant fight with me in which I have nothing to lose."

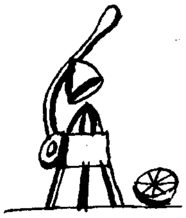
Sohmer denies that he ever made this threat, but he and McGrail agree that their meeting ended in a bitter impasse and a rapid exeunt. Have your lawyers get in touch with me, she told Sohmer, and, with that, she walked out of the office, got into her car, and drove away.

That was August 31st. For nearly six weeks, Sohmer and McGrail communicated only through legal counsel and stacks of papers filed in the courts of Los Angeles County—claims, counter-claims, applications for temporary restraining orders. They did not meet again until depositions began, in mid-October.

Until August, Sohmer and McGrail had formed a satisfying, if somewhat odd, team. After Sohmer was fired from Columbia Pictures, in 1986, he became what is known in academe as a "mature student." For a long time, he had felt a certain hole in his life—a sense that he



was "wasting" himself, as he put it—and so, in 1989, while juggling a new career as an independent television producer and writer and an author of Washington thrillers, Sohmer enrolled in a master's-degree program at Boston University. He took McGrail's Shakespeare course there and thrived. After receiving his M.A. from Boston, he started a doctoral program at Oxford—he spent two full terms in England—and in the summers he worked with McGrail.



Sohmer had made his fortune grinding out what might be called the opposite of Shakespeare: "Leonard Part 6," "La Bamba," "Bloodknot," "Mancuso, F.B.I." He spoke the hermetic language of participation points and grosses. And yet he indulged his passion for Shakespeare, took it very seriously, despite the ribbing he endured for it at the Bel Air Country Club. He plunged into the Latin grammars, the concordances, the black-letter texts, all the stuff of Renaissance studies.

McGrail was a creature of the academy, a denizen of the library carrel and the faculty meeting. She was a highly promising scholar and popular teacher, but she was thirty-seven and was virtually unpublished. She faced the spectre of imminent tenure review and, to pass, she would have to write something of moment. The job in Los Angeles gave her time, money, and proximity to good libraries and friends. It also provided her with someone to talk to who was as enthusiastic about Shakespeare as she was.

It was true that some of McGrail's friends were wary of her arrangement in Bel Air. One of McGrail's closest friends in Los Angeles, a Dead Sea Scrolls scholar turned screenwriter named Bob Davis, thought Sohmer was just another Hollywood egomaniac craving intellectual respectability. "From the first time I met him, I thought he was a fake," Davis told me. "But Mary Ann always defended him as a good student. She'd say he had his faults, he had his pompous aspects, but as a student he was one of the brightest she'd run across. . . . The first two years she was out in California, I had more contact with Steve—usually as Mary Ann's escort to one occasion or another at his place in Bel Air. I remember one particularly surreal afternoon when there was a picnic by the pool and the guests were me, Mary Ann, Steve and his wife, Gene Simmons, from the rock band Kiss—the guy with the huge tongue, I think—and his companion, a former Playmate of the Year, or something, who was so pregnant I thought she was going to burst. Gene Simmons and Steve sat discussing medieval Jewish legends. Meanwhile, the Playmate and I listened and Mary Ann kept watching me, hoping I wouldn't say anything improper."

Odd as the Bel Air arrangement may have seemed to some of McGrail's friends, it had its distinct appeal. McGrail got along well with both Sohmer and his wife, Deidre Hall, who is an actress and plays a troubled (and occasionally demon-possessed) psychiatrist on the soap opera "Days of Our Lives." The study sessions were more than civil; they were friendly and intense. After the morning meetings, Sohmer went to what he laughingly calls his "real job"—his production company in Burbank—and McGrail was free to pursue her own academic research. She usually drove up to San Marino and worked at the vast and luxurious Huntington Library.

This summer had looked as if it would be no less ideal than the three previous ones. In July, Sohmer had earned his doctorate from Oxford, and, a few weeks earlier, he and McGrail set out to work their way carefully through "Hamlet." That was when their problems began.

Both of them believe that the play has buried within it an ingenious and highly subversive reading of Martin Luther's rebellion against the Catholic Church. How and when each of them came to that conclusion was the crux of their dispute, but they were united in their feeling that the idea itself is of great importance. In the improbable event that this theory of "Hamlet" were to prove correct—if it should indeed turn out that Shakespeare wrote a play in complicated support of the religious reformer who dared oppose the popes of his era—it could alter, even revolutionize, our understanding of the loftiest figure in the history of English literature and the play that is probably his best-known work. To say nothing of what it would do to the Shakespeare-criticism industry.

Within days of that last August meeting, both sides rushed to establish a paper trail for any possible legal battle. Sohmer's work emphasized Shakespeare's use of the calendar in "Hamlet," and how it might provide hints of the character's relation to Luther. McGrail, who acknowledges the originality of Sohmer's work on the calendar, was working out textual parallels between "Hamlet" and various biographies of Luther—particularly a long passage on Luther in the sixteenth-century Protestant martyrology "Actes and Monuments," by John Foxe.

In early September, academic journals from California to England began getting query letters and phone calls from Sohmer and McGrail. On the advice of his lawyers, Sohmer even issued a press release claiming a new, "unrecognized source" for "Hamlet," though he neglected to say what the source was. A week later, Sohmer sent an article on "Hamlet" out over the Internet. Not long after that, Sohmer's lawyers filed an ex-parte application for a temporary restraining order that would forbid McGrail to engage in any public discussion of or to arrange any publication of a theory that was not in fact her own. A judge granted the temporary restraining order; it expired after two weeks. The next step was a full-blown lawsuit.

In court documents filed in September, Sohmer said McGrail was a kind of assistant "hired for the sole purpose of working for my benefit." In a sense, he acted as if McGrail were a contract writer at his own back-yard version of Columbia Pictures. Sohmer also claimed, in a letter to McGrail's lawyers, that the ideas about "Hamlet" were the "intellectual property" of Steve Sohmer and his independent production company, Steve Sohmer Incorporated. He demanded that McGrail cease her attempts to publish any work on "Hamlet" and Luther, turn over to him any of her writings on the subject, and "forthwith deliver to Plaintiff all notes taken by her in the course of her employment with Plaintiff."

In a letter laying out the demands necessary for a settlement, Sohmer said that McGrail would have to apologize for her alleged misdeeds and curtail any publication on "Hamlet" and Luther for eighteen months. He planned to pursue the case with little regard to time or expense. Sohmer realized that the battle might cast him in the villain's role—"I know that this might seem like a David-and-Goliath story," he told me, "and I ain't gonna be the Jewish guy"—but he did not care. He wanted what he believed was his. "This is a matter of principle," he said later. "I am not a vindictive man."

McGrail, for her part, continued her research on "Hamlet" but was profoundly frightened that the battle with Sohmer would wipe out her savings, bury her in debt, and ruin her career in academe. "I can see twenty years of work going down the drain," she said. "And for what?"

I FIRST heard about this strange theory of "Hamlet," and the even stranger dispute, at the end of August. An old friend of McGrail's called an editor at this magazine to say that McGrail was in the early stages of working on what could well turn out to be a singular discovery in the history of Shakespeare scholarship. After talking to McGrail a couple of times on the phone, I made plans to go to Los Angeles on Labor Day weekend—just a few days after Sohmer and McGrail held their last meeting.

Before I left, I reread the play and then went over the historical and mythological background of the "Hamlet" story. The leading scholars all provide roughly the same account: While living an intensely active life in the theatre, Shakespeare wrote his plays at the rate of nearly two a year. He relied heavily, and unapologetically, on other dramas, poems, tracts, and chronicles. As if to prove T. S. Eliot's saw that immature poets imitate, mature ones steal, Shakespeare stole wholesale. He grabbed up facts, narratives, imagery, and vocabulary, and then transformed those materials for his own use, always transcending the power of the original sources. For the Roman plays, for instance, he went to Plutarch; for the English-history plays, he combed Holinshed's "Chronicles."

The standard explanation of "Hamlet" is that it is based mainly on two sources: a twelfth-century history (not published until the sixteenth century) called "Gesta Danorum," by Saxo Grammaticus, and a retelling of Saxo's tale by the French writer François de Belleforest. A prince called Amleth, murder in the court, incestuous marriage, philosophical introspection, feigned madness, a voyage abroad, and an altered letter—Shakespeare clearly dug these elements out of Saxo and Belleforest and fitted them to his own design.

Scholars have also made arguments, with varying degrees of speculation, that Shakespeare used a wide range of other texts to develop particular episodes or characters in "Hamlet": Thomas Kyd's "The Spanish Tragedy," Thomas Nash's pamphlet "Pierce Penniless His Supplication to the Devil," Timothy Bright's "Treatise on Melancholy," and Montaigne's "Essays." It is also possible that Shakespeare saw a play based on the Hamlet legend. Although scholars have not been able to identify this so-called "Ur-Hamlet," there are references to such a play in the writings of Thomas Nash. Thomas Lodge, writing in 1596, four or five years before Shakespeare probably wrote his play, refers to the "ghost which cried so miserably at the Theatre, like an oyster-wife, *Hamlet, revenge*."

There is very little in the mainstream criticism—almost nothing in nearly four centuries of commentary—to suggest that Shakespeare used the life of Martin Luther as essential source material for "Hamlet." But scholars have not overlooked the matter. Roland Mushat Frye's book "The Renaissance Hamlet" (1984) is just one of many that have puzzled over the echoes of Reformation theology and history in the play.

Through the years, beginning in the late eighteenth century, "Hamlet" commentators have repeatedly cited two details in particular that are suggestive of Luther. The first, and more obvious, detail is Shakespeare's use of Wittenberg as the university where Hamlet has been studying abroad. In Act I, Scene 2, Wittenberg is mentioned four times, and we learn that it was there that Hamlet met his friend Horatio. Wittenberg, a provincial university founded in 1502, became famous when Luther nailed to its church door his revolutionary Ninety-five Theses in 1517, decrying the abuses of the Roman Church. If Shakespeare did not mean to highlight this link with his Hamlet, why did he not send the Prince to some other university?

The second Lutheran suggestion comes in Act IV, Scene 3, when Ham-

"If it makes you feel better—yes, I am heterocentric."

Victoria Roberts

"Travel is the sherbet between courses of reality."

• •

let, who has killed Polonius, is asked where the body is. Hamlet replies:

> A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots.

The import of the pun will elude most contemporary readers, but Elizabethans, critics have argued, would very likely have heard the echo of the Diet of Worms. In 1521, after Luther refused to disavow his writings, the council, or Diet, of the German city of Worms, headed by Emperor Charles V, pronounced him an outlaw. This was a pivotal moment in the history of the Reformation—even in England, where Calvinism and the Church of England eventually prevailed over Lutheranism.

Various editions of the play—the Arden, the Oxford, the Cambridge—all take notice of one or both of these Lutheran moments in "Hamlet," but there is little to be found on their implications. They are remarked on as wordplay, puns, winks at the Reformation, and not much more. Shakespeare was an incessant punster, and no amount of scholarship could cover all his puns in detail. According to Samuel Johnson, punning was Shakespeare's "fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it."

And yet Shakespeare was a deeply intentional poet, an artist who wasted nothing, who layered his language and meanings with unsurpassed complexity and wit. What if the two moments hinted at a far more elaborate architecture of puns and references? What if Shakespeare, writing around 1600, had been able to divert his critics (and monarchs) with an already complicated story based on Saxo's narrative, and had at the same time been, sotto voce, playing out the drama of a religious revolutionary who had dared to defy Henry VIII, the father of the reigning queen, Elizabeth? Is it possible that no one has ever noticed this? These were the questions that Mary Ann McGrail, for one, was asking herself this summer. When I asked her what her discovery would mean if it turned out to be legitimate, she did not hesitate to answer. In fact, she had created for herself, and her theory, a heightened sense of drama.

"It means that I'm telling four centuries of scholars, including Samuel Johnson, that they either have not disclosed this, which is entirely possible, or have missed it," she said when we met. "And, if I'm right about this, it means editors who have spent their careers, their lives, editing the text will have to rethink their work and reëdit the whole thing. It means that scholars will have to rethink a central work of Western literature. And that there will be other reactions, too. Negative stuff. Someone will say, 'Well, if this is true, why the hell have four hundred years' worth of commentators missed it? And why is it that this unheard-of academic from Boston is claiming to find something so outrageous? Who is she? Some kind of lunatic?' "

On the telephone, McGrail sounded jittery, humorless—especially when we talked about her falling out with Sohmer. I expected to meet an academic eccentric of the type familiar to readers of the university novels of David Lodge: fragile, bookish, and a little off. McGrail, it turned out, is a tall and attractive woman of almost self-defeating confidence. Time and again, she cautioned that she would have to subject her work to critical readings by all sorts of experts, but she nevertheless had a quality of certainty about her. "I think you're going to be amazed when you see what I've put together—what *Shakespeare* put together," she said.

The night before we were really going to get down to work, McGrail met me for a drink at the bar of my hotel. As a jazz trio played softly, she talked awhile about her career. McGrail's father is a retired lawyer, and the family—her parents and a tribe of four daughters—lived outside Washington, D.C. After getting an undergraduate degree from Harvard in 1980 and spending a year as a volunteer worker for Mother Teresa in India, she returned to Harvard for a doctorate in English literature.

McGrail worked on her thesis with the resident Shakespeare specialist, Marjorie Garber, but, as a political conservative, found herself drawn less toward Garber's feminist readings and more toward the views of Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., a leading figure in the Government Department and a conservative follower of the late political philosopher Leo Strauss. Even as she was studying classics and the languages and literature that dominated the English Renaissance, she also grew interested in Shakespeare's political thinking and in the idea of a writer working under—or around—the complicated political pressures of his time. After writing her dissertation, on tyrants in four of Shakespeare's plays, McGrail embarked on the typical *Wanderjahre* of young humanities scholars in the age of the cutback. She taught at Kenyon College and Catholic University, and finally wound up in the University Professors Program at Boston University. All the while, McGrail taught a number of courses on censorship and literature—with reading lists that included Plato, Milton, Lawrence, Joyce, Bulgakov, and Solzhenitsyn—and, most of all, on Shakespeare. In McGrail's thinking, Shakespeare wrote about a controversial figure like Luther with some of the same conscious stealth as a Soviet writer trying to sneak criticism of Stalin past the Politburo.

Shakespeare wrote "Hamlet" at a time when Elizabeth's reign was reaching its end, and James, the son of a Catholic—Mary, Queen of Scots—was the likely successor. England was still feeling the aftershocks of the Reformation. Elizabethan audiences would have still had in their memory the notorious Ridolfi Plot, for example, in which James's mother, together with a Florentine banker who had ties to the Vatican, schemed to topple Elizabeth. They would have also remembered the Catholic slaughter of Protestant Huguenots in 1572, memorialized in Christopher Marlowe's play "The Massacre at Paris." At the same time, if Shakespeare wanted to write a play celebrating Luther and admonishing a new king to avoid a return to Catholicism and the power of Rome, he had to do it without insulting James. He clearly succeeded. James so prized Shakespeare's troupe that upon taking the throne, in 1603, he brought it to court as the King's Men.

"Remember, Shakespeare was the most successful commercial playwright of his time," McGrail said. "He had the support of the two monarchs and was careful about staying at the top of the heap. He didn't want to get shut down. He waited until the very end of his career to write about Henry VIII, who was closer to his time, and generally wrote about figures who were more safely in the past. I think he knew well that it would have been impossible to stage an overt play about the life of Martin Luther. He was writing 'Hamlet' at a very delicate time, when it seemed likely that the inheritor to Elizabeth would be James. Shakespeare had to be conscious of this. He also had to be painfully aware that Elizabeth was the daughter of Henry VIII, who had come into severe conflict with Luther. Henry VIII won the title Defender of the Faith from the Vatican after he denounced Luther. Then, amazingly, Henry VIII asked Luther to endorse his marriage to Anne Boleyn, and Luther refused. Maybe Shakespeare wouldn't have been beheaded for staging a play on Luther, but it would have been enormously risky."

THE next morning, McGrail arrived at my hotel loaded for bear. She carried a bag bulging with books, charts, Xeroxed manuscripts, and notes, and plopped herself down across from me. Without hesitation, she began to go through her research, starting with the origin of her idea.

She said that she had been thinking for a long time about Shakespeare in relation to "esoteric writers"—a term that Leo Strauss and his followers often applied to, say, Plato or Maimonides, who used oblique strategies to express their insights when they were under political and social duress. As part of that thought process, she said, she began to ponder the two Lutheran clues in "Hamlet"—the four mentions of Wittenberg and the pun on the Diet of Worms. Two years ago, she said, she pointed them out to Sohmer. (Sohmer says he cannot remember that but concedes that it's possible.)

Sohmer wanted to read "Hamlet" this summer, and he was specifically interested in Shakespeare's use of the calendar in the play. He said that this spring he had come to think of "Julius Caesar" and "Hamlet" as companion pieces, with "Julius Caesar" representing the advent of Christianity and "Hamlet" the Reformation. McGrail had intended to use 1995-96, a sabbatical year for her, to write a book for the Duckworth Press, a small English publisher, on Aristotelian and Platonic theories of the artistic imagination, but as the summer wore on she started to concentrate on that lingering notion: the life of Luther as a direct source of the play. McGrail says that she then came across a translation of Philipp Melanchthon's Luther biography—Melanchthon was a close friend of Luther's. (Sohmer says they discovered the biography together at his direction.) Then, McGrail claims, working on her own at the Huntington Library, she began studying John Foxe's "Actes and Monuments."

McGrail's argument, as she sketched it out for me, is that, although Shakespeare certainly used Saxo and Belleforest for his account of the Hamlet legend, he also used Foxe as a direct source. (Melanchthon's biography, she said, informs Foxe but doesn't have nearly the same direct bearing on "Hamlet.") "Actes and Monuments," perhaps the most popular book of the time after the Geneva Bible and "The Book of Homilies," contains a sixty-five-page passage called "The History of Doctor Martin Luther, with His Life and Doctrine Described."

In a draft of an article written for—and eventually rejected by—the *Times Literary Supplement*, around the time of the breakup with Sohmer, McGrail opens with a characteristically bold proclamation. After declaring that Foxe is the key to unlocking "Hamlet," she writes, "This source should be regarded as a transparency, to be laid over the play, which gives new depth and shape to it. The play is a play of riddles to which the Foxe provides the answers. To date, no one has bothered to hunt the fox."

Shakespeare was so playful and, at the same time, so cautious about highlighting the Lutheran theme, McGrail maintains, that he may have even teased his reader about his source, dropping a single tremendous hint. In the First Folio version of the play, published in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, the editors added a line that had been left out of the Second Quarto and other editions published while Shakespeare was still alive.

> HAMLET: The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body. The King, is a thing—
> GUILDENSTERN: A thing my Lord?
> HAMLET: Of nothing: bring me to him, hide Fox, and all after.

For McGrail, the half line "hide Fox, and all after" is an incredible "teaser," and one that Shakespeare might have thought too obvious for publication in his lifetime. "Hide Fox, and all after" refers to a children's game, but in McGrail's thinking it is Shakespeare or the Folio's editor playfully hiding John Foxe and his life of Luther within the text of "Hamlet."

In a general scheme, McGrail sees Luther, like Hamlet, as a man in a world "out of joint," who is commanded by a ghost of a father to "set it right." According to Foxe's account, Luther saw the world as "out of frame" (a phrase that Claudius uses, in Act I, Scene 2), and Luther's mission was to battle the decadence of the Church of Rome, its drift from Scripture into ornate ritual and corruption. He struggled against the Church's practice of selling indulgences, for instance—the practice of papal representatives promising shorter terms in Purgatory for a fee. Hamlet is commanded by his father's ghost to set right the natural order of the Danish court: he must kill Claudius and avenge his father's murder. The Danish court is like the decadent Church.

Foxe and Shakespeare open their texts in literal and metaphysical gloom. In Foxe, those with intelligence and judgment or "eyes to see" can note "in what blindness and darkness the world was drowned," thanks to a corrupt and powerful Church immersed only in "outward observations, ceremonies, and idolatry." Foxe continues, "Instead of the only living Lord, we worshipped dead stocks and stones: in place of Christ immortal, we adored mortal bread." "Hamlet," too, opens in darkness, at midnight on the battlement of a castle, the kingdom plunged in a state of corruption and war. Foxe says the priests of the Church "make battle" on Europe, exacting tribute, in the form of indulgences, all over Europe in order to build St. Peter's; Shakespeare's Denmark is a "warlike state," exacting tribute from Britain and occupying the Norway of Fortinbras.

McGrail notes that Foxe begins his account of Luther by emphasizing Luther's immersion in the Bible, in St. Augustine, and in the writings of his early intellectual influence, St. Bernard, from whom the monk began to understand that "man is freely justified by faith" rather than works—a principle that would form the core of Luther's theology. And the first character to speak in "Hamlet" is "the sentinel, Barnardo—an Italian form of the name Bernard," McGrail notes, and says, "Reading St. Bernard, Luther begins to ask who is guarding the Church."

Acting on the reported testimony of Barnardo and the other sentinel, Francisco, Hamlet himself sees and speaks with the ghost of his father. (Incidentally, McGrail points out, Hamlet addresses him as "old mole" and "pioner." Both "mole" and "pioner" were terms for a miner, and Foxe notes that Luther's father was a miner.) Hamlet's conversation with his father's ghost is, in McGrail's reading, a search into the knowledge of past authority, a reënactment of Luther's reading of St. Augustine, a staging "of what it means to read ancient texts."

McGrail also sees a link between Luther's urge to reform the Church—for it to reëmphasize its core commandments and texts—and images in "Hamlet" of a backward movement in time. The first three characters who appear in the play, in the scene on the ramparts, are Francisco (whom McGrail cites as St. Francis), Barnardo (St. Bernard), and Marcellus (St. Marcellus the Centurion). They are, McGrail says, "introduced in reverse historical order, which sets the clock of history going backward in the play." And there are two more such metaphors of moving backward even while looking ahead. The first comes when, in Act II, Scene 2, Hamlet remarks to Polonius, "Yourself, sir, shall grow old as I am, if like a Crab you could go backward." Then, in Act II, Scene 1, Ophelia recounts for her father Hamlet's bizarre behavior, ending with his crablike exit:

> That done, he lets me go,
> And with his head over his shoulder turn'd
> He seem'd to find his way without his eyes,
> For out o' doors he went without their helps,
> And to the last bended their light on me.

McGrail sees Luther's character, as it

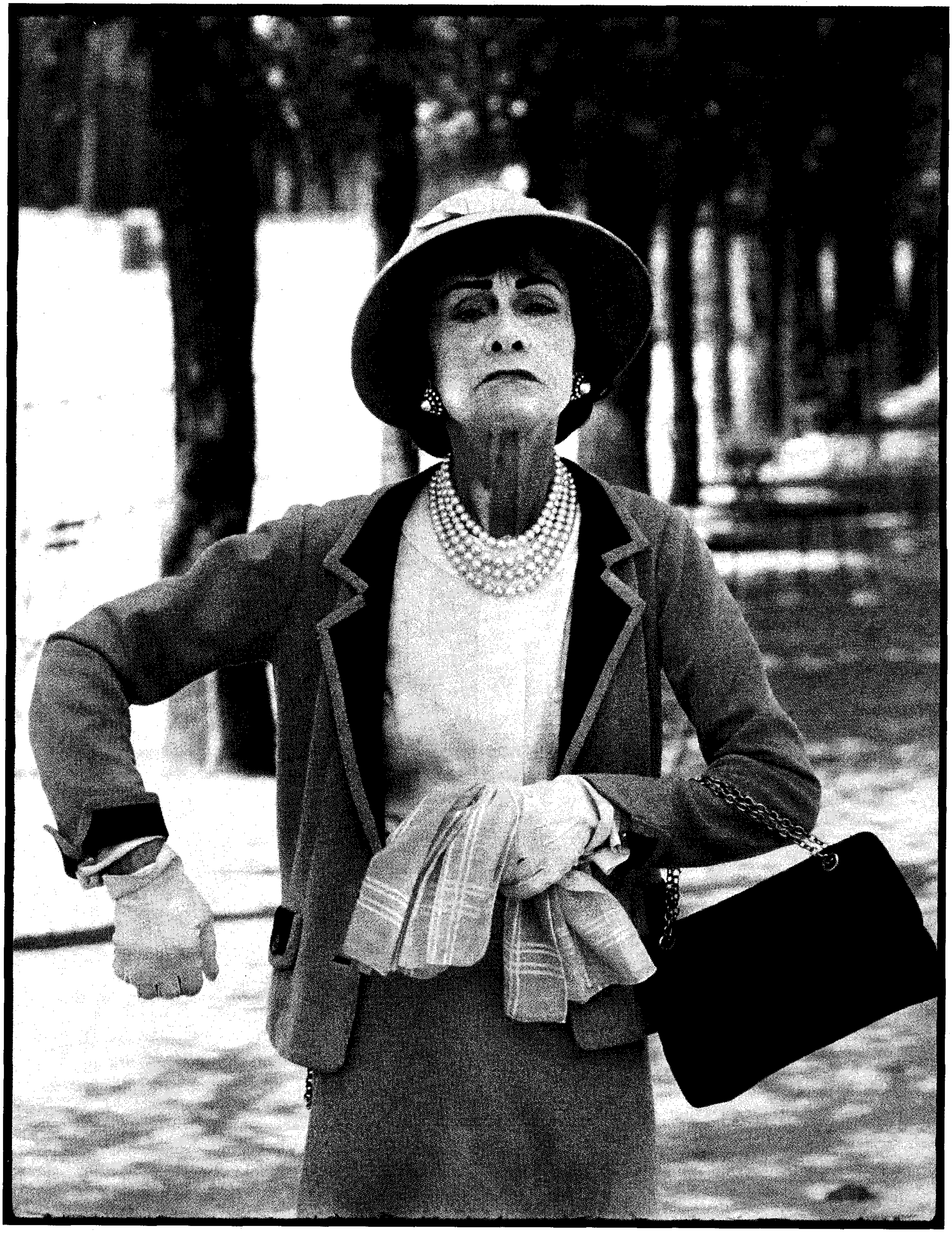
PHOTO ALBUM

LIBERMAN'S LIVES

IN "Then," a stylish book of black-and-white snapshots taken by Alexander Liberman over a fifty-year period, an air of luxurious bohemianism prevails. His images of public people in private moments capture the idiosyncratic style and élan of celebrated human beings divested of their show-biz trappings: Marc Chagall flirting with his wife on the terrace of their home in Vence; the actress Ruth Gordon laughing on a beach in Saint-Tropez; Truman Capote wearing a towel as a turban; Yves Saint Laurent cuddling his chihuahua; Marlene Dietrich stretching her famous legs out behind her in a clear bath of seawater. In Liberman's book, one doesn't see Picasso being Picasso—painting a large canvas, or being amused by Cocteau at one of the innumerable luncheon parties they attended together. One sees an aging man, bereft at the end of a love affair, circling in the orbit of need created by his vulnerable children.

"Then" is a professional memoir of sorts, a visual record of the extraordinary people Liberman had access to on both sides of the Atlantic—as an artist in his own right and as the presiding spirit of Condé Nast for more than thirty years. But it is also a family album, filled with friends and relatives. A sense of relaxed confidence seems to pervade these intimate portraits, whether they were taken in a Connecticut garden, aboard a Venetian *motoscafo*, or on the docks of New York. How sad it is to compare them with the self-consciously "famous" faces that inundate us now, pallid with a flashbulb sheen and with the bottomless desire to be known. Exposure has become an inevitability. In today's tabloid climate, there is no life for the rich and famous which can be as private as these photographs feel. Liberman makes us nostalgic for a world that few of us have glimpsed, let alone inhabited—because no one gets to live there anymore.—HILTON ALS

PHOTOGRAPH BY
ALEXANDER LIBERMAN



Coco Chanel in the Tuileries, Paris, 1951.

is portrayed in Foxe, and in later biographies as well, as not unlike Hamlet's. Both Luther and Hamlet are on a spiritual journey and, in their respective ways (in theological writings and in dramatic soliloquy), are given to extended rumination on issues of the soul, existence, and action. The spiritual journeys that Luther and Hamlet make are similar, from doubt to a belief in faith through works. In his first soliloquy, Hamlet questions God's "canon" but, finally, in a remark to Horatio late in the play, says, "There's a divinty that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will."

The two men are also similar in disposition. "Remember," McGrail said as we finished a long session over her notes, "like Hamlet, Luther was a very strange guy. He was given to what is called *Anfechtungen*—periods of spiritual turmoil. He was a very tortured soul. The Foxe biography talks of Luther's 'astonyings'—his fits. In debate, Luther would appear very staunch—'Here I stand!'—and to others his actions looked like insanity. Luther looked like a crazy man." Hamlet's strategy throughout the play is to feign madness, and even in private contemplation he is also touched with *Anfechtungen.*

EARLY the next morning, McGrail picked me up at my hotel and we headed north on the San Diego Freeway. She wanted to take me to the Huntington Library, where she had been reading various editions, some quite rare, of "Actes and Monuments" and an even rarer version of "Hamlet," a Second Quarto edition, circa 1604-05—one of eight originals in the world. (The Second Quarto is generally recognized as the "good," more accurate version of Shakespeare published in his lifetime—a corrective to the First, or "bad," Quarto.)

"I think when you get there and you actually hold this text in your hands you'll get a better idea of how excited I am," McGrail said as she accelerated into the passing lane.

The library was the gift of a California railroad magnate, and it has the vernal magnificence of a health spa for the rich. One expects to see the shade of Gloria Swanson being wheeled around, her face caked in curative muds. Surrounding the library is a vast botanical garden, a kind of Disneyland for the green-thumbed. It includes a cactus garden with every imaginable species, a Japanese garden, a rose garden. There was a baking breeze. The only moisture came from the sprinkler system. The gardens glistened. Tropical birds twittered in the museum of trees.

Once we were inside, it took a while for McGrail to convince the librarians that her guest could be trusted to sit with her in the reading rooms. She told them that she wanted to show me the Foxe manuscript and the Second Quarto of "Hamlet" but that she would be there the entire time, monitoring the situation.

"The Huntington has a reputation as a stuffy place, but they're nice once you get to know them," she assured me. "In fact, it's a pretty strange place. A lot of weird regulars. There's one guy here who comes dressed in a white turban and a blue tutu."

McGrail led me into a rare-book reading room and ordered the Foxe and the "Hamlet." The librarian looked me over and narrowed her eyes. Then she stared at my breast pocket.

"No pens," she said. "Pencils. No pens."

I removed my pen and laid it out like a gun on the desk between us.

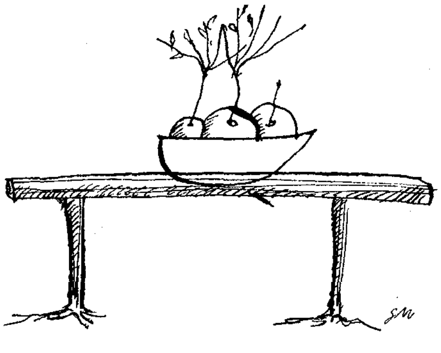
"I'll call you when the books are ready."

The Foxe, an enormous artifact, arrived first. In the Renaissance, nearly every Protestant church had a copy of "Actes and Monuments." I enjoyed going through it, but I already had a Xeroxed copy of the Luther section and was really more eager to see the Second Quarto.

When it arrived, I was a little surprised at how small it was. The pages of the original had been sliced out and pasted onto clean pages and bound in green leather. The frontispiece asks for the reader's confidence, declaring this version of the play to be "according to the true and perfect Coppie."

I picked up the book. The librarian, twenty yards away, shot me a dark, lidslow glance.

"Here, you'd better let me hold that," McGrail said. "She's nervous you'll do something."



McGrail began flipping to some of her favorite "correspondences" in the play—the links between Hamlet and Luther. She turned to a moment in Act II, Scene 2 when Hamlet, reading a book (the Bible, McGrail ventures), gets into a verbal duel with Polonius, all the while feigning madness:

> HAMLET: For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion—Have you a daughter?
>
> POLONIUS: I have, my lord.
>
> HAMLET: Let her not walk i'th' sun. Conception is a blessing, but as your daughter may conceive—friend, look to 't.

Then she moved on to the end of the play. In the climactic scene, which ends with a pile of corpses, the King drops a pearl into a goblet of wine.

"What you're seeing there is Shakespeare playing with the two sacraments that spell out the key differences between Catholicism and Protestantism," McGrail said. "With Polonius, Hamlet is playing around with the Immaculate Conception, which Luther questioned. And then the King is performing some sort of Communion. For Catholics, Communion is actual—the wine becomes Christ's blood, the bread his flesh—but it is symbolic for Protestants. These are central debates."

McGrail flipped to the gravedigger scene, which begins Act V—a scene that we had examined earlier, at the hotel. In that scene, two gravediggers talk about what constitutes a proper burial for a suicide like Ophelia: "What, art a heathen?" one gravedigger asks the other, who has just displayed Biblical ignorance. "How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says Adam digged. Could he dig without arms?"

"That's central for Luther," McGrail said. "Remember, even Luther wasn't able to read the Bible for himself until he was practically a grown man. That was typical for that time. Luther wanted the common man to read Scripture for himself in vernacular translations. . . . Here the gravedigger shows that he has done it, and his interpretation is literal. This is a more interpretative point, but Shakespeare is bringing out one of the consequences of Luther's Reformation."

Then we turned to a central moment in McGrail's argument. In Act III, Scene 2, just before the court players are about to perform "The Mousetrap"—the play within the play—Hamlet coaches them to avoid "o'erdoing" their roles:

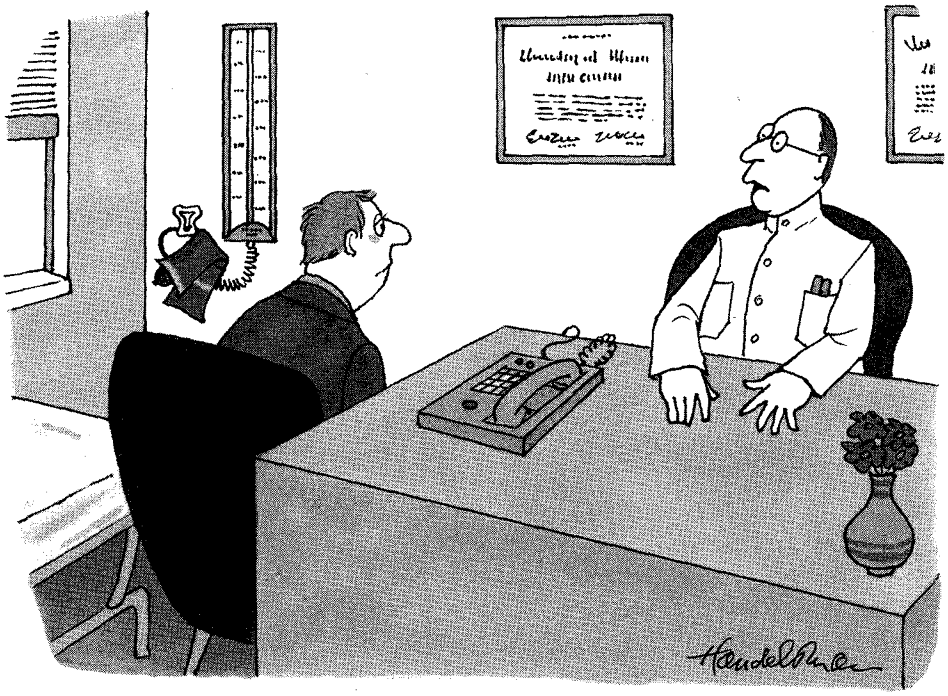
> HAMLET: Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. . . . O, there be players that I have seen play—and heard others praise, and that highly—not to speak it profanely, that neither having th'accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christians, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of Nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.
>
> FIRST PLAYER: I hope we have reformed that indifferently with us.
>
> HAMLET: O reform it altogether.

McGrail pointed out that for Elizabethans, Protestants of rather recent vintage, theatre had in large measure replaced some of the high ritual and ceremony that went missing with the diminishment of Catholicism and the rise of Calvinism. Hamlet, then, is speaking ostensibly of theatre but metaphorically of religion. For McGrail, the line "O reform it altogether" is a pivotal moment. "An Elizabethan audience can't fail to hear the resonance," she said. " 'Reform' would ring in their ears."

But that was still not why we had driven out to the Huntington. McGrail leafed through the little green book, pointing out the places where Shakespeare names animals: Moles in Act I, Asses in Acts II and V, a Deere and a Hart in Act III. Many more: an ark.

"Will you look at these?" McGrail said. "I found out from Luther biographies that he was interested in Noah. I thought, Well, I have finally lost it. I've gone crazy." Shakespeare, she argued, capitalized the names of the animals to emphasize their presence not only to those who would see "Hamlet" but to those who would read it.

"Luther was deeply attracted to the story of Noah," McGrail went on, "and that's because it was with Noah that God made his Covenant. Luther identified with Noah's position and his place in the world. The Church had become so corrupt and worthless that it had to fall. Luther was in a place analogous with Noah's, in a sense. When I saw that, I felt as if I were reporting back from four hundred years ago, saying, 'Just look at what this guy was capable of!' "



"I wish I could help you. The problem is that you're too sick for managed care."

It wasn't until we were driving back from the Huntington and cruising along the hills on Sunset Boulevard that I realized just how shaken McGrail was about her dispute with Steve Sohmer. Their fight had not yet reached the deposition stage, and she kept saying that she wanted to keep our talks, as much as possible, on the subject of Shakespeare. Never mind that the reason she was rushing her work, the reason she was talking to me at all, had everything to do with Steve Sohmer. "If this turns out to be a duel, a scandal, it'll ruin me and my ideas," she said.

Although McGrail said that the ideas we had run through were her own, she also said many times that Sohmer had made "an important contribution" by figuring out how the life of Luther and "Hamlet" were linked through Shakespeare's manipulation of the calendar. In his doctoral dissertation on "Julius Caesar" and in his writing this summer on "Hamlet," Sohmer tries to prove that Shakespeare created a series of resonances—between Caesar and Christ, between Hamlet and Luther—through an intricate use of mathematics and the calendar. The action in "Hamlet," for example, falls on the same dates that marked particular festival days in 1517, the year Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the church door in Wittenberg. McGrail, in the piece she wrote for the *Times Literary Supplement*, refers the reader to only one other scholar—Steve Sohmer.

"I mentioned the business of Luther to him a couple of summers ago, and this summer he came up with the 1517 material," McGrail told me. "I said, 'You should pursue that, it's elegant work.' That is work that is original with him."

As we were driving along Sunset, McGrail casually pointed out the gates of Bel Air. I asked her if we could drive by the Sohmer house.

At first, McGrail's eyes widened, then narrowed, as if she had gone from shock to determination. She pulled into a side street and made a U-turn. Then her eyes filled with tears.

"I can't do it," she said.

"There's no reason we have to."

"I'm sorry. I can't do it," she said, and we drove on, past Bel Air and into the heart of the Sunset Strip.

Not long after arriving in Los Angeles, I had left a message with Sohmer's production company, in Burbank, asking if it would be possible to get together with him to talk about Shakespeare. When we finally hooked up and I said I'd met with Mary Ann

McGrail, Sohmer said, Well, fine, that was interesting, we'll talk. "Come on over later, around five-thirty," he said. "We'll have a good glass of port. You like port?"

The Los Angeles *Times*, which covers the real-estate market with impressive zeal, reports that Sohmer's house, on Strada Corta, for which he paid three million dollars, is just under six thousand square feet; there are four bedrooms, seven baths, maids' quarters, a guest apartment, an office, and "a motor court." (Sohmer also owns a four-bedroom wing of a "condoized" seventeenth-century manor house seventy miles northwest of London, in Shipton-under-Wychwood.)

I eased my car up to Sohmer's gate and, with a camera eye staring at me, announced myself to a fizzing intercom. Then came the buzz, the yawning gate, the "motor court": a Rolls-Royce, a minivan, a red Mercedes sports car, a Lincoln Town Car, an ancient bulldog sleeping in the late-afternoon sun.

I rang the front doorbell and waited for a while. Waited and shuffled, but no one came. Then from around the side of the main house came Sohmer. He wore a faded blue work shirt, tennis shorts, white socks, and sneakers.

"Come on back to the office," he said.

Sohmer uses a small house behind the pool as his office. He gets up at five and spends at least the first half of the day working at home, first on Shakespeare and then on "something productive," which is to say his work in television and movies. Later in the day, he drives to his production offices "to check in." After studying writing at Columbia in his early twenties, Sohmer published a book of short stories, "The Way It Was," which won for him the sort of reviews that lead to a promising career. But the pressure to earn money, he said, led him to eighteen years in television production and then the movies. Since he was fired as the head of Columbia Pictures in 1986, he has made his living writing and producing television shows, including a miniseries made from his novel "Favorite Son." One of his latest projects is "The Deidre Hall Story," a television movie that tells the story of how Sohmer and his wife struggled with infertility problems and finally had two children with the help of a surrogate mother.

PROGRAM

The glass in her hand flares
like a flower. It is cold and clear
and has a slender long stem.

Over the Martini she sees things
just happened. Her grandmother
saw two dead men, husband

and father, though she saw
elaborate coffins. Here the dead
arrive at six o'clock.

They lie in the street
in artless attitudes.
No pan-in to see

if the eyes are closed or not.
Obviously her Martini is blameless,
and she takes small sips,

with a slight shudder, from the chill
of glass, or scene, or both.
From a new angle still they lie.

She is aware of a deeper dismay.
She feels a cold horny finger—
habit's—gently touch her heart.

She is positive it is happening,
and stares harder at the shapes, but they are gone.
And someone is talking weather.

—JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN

Sohmer led me into his office and sat behind a huge glass-topped table. He was surrounded by a vast library dominated by Shakespeareana, and, above the bookcases, walls decorated with posters from his own past in books and shows. His computer was on, and an article he was writing about "Hamlet" and Luther throbbed on the screen. Just as we were settling in and starting to talk about his doctoral dissertation, he took a phone call that had something to do with the details of a miniseries.

"From the sublime to the ridiculous," Sohmer said, smiling and covering the receiver with his palm.

Sohmer does not apologize for making a living in low- and middlebrow entertainment; in fact, he seems to thrive on his dual role. In each of the two worlds he inhabits—Hollywood and Stratford-Upon-Avon—his other identity gives him a certain panache. "Steve is an extraordinary character, with all the self-confidence associated with Hollywood, but now directed toward this other unusual area, toward Shakespeare," I was later told by Lawrence Danson, a Shakespearean at Princeton University who once stayed at Sohmer's home in the Cotswolds. "He goes about his work sometimes in a sort of Hollywood way, consulting, taking a meeting with this or that professor. He is a fascinating figure in a sacred-monster sort of way. You are tempted to laugh at his autodidact ambitions, but when I looked at his dissertation I was skeptical of its conclusions and yet I saw that it was the product of enormous labor and considerable scholarship."

After Sohmer finished his call, I said that I was fascinated by the notion of Hamlet as Luther but dumbstruck to see that two people, both deeply immersed in Elizabethan culture, were now engaging lawyers and preparing to go to war over what amounted to a highly speculative theory about a play written nearly four hundred years ago.

As Sohmer listened, he puffed peacefully on a cigar. Yet, more often than not, he gazed at a large television screen above his desk and its ghostly image of the security gate in front of his house. When I finished, Sohmer took a last drag on his cigar, blew a long plume toward the ceiling, and looked across the desk at me. "You have come at a propitious time," he said. "We sent out a press release announcing a new source for Shakespeare."

Sohmer dug out a copy of the release that his lawyers had advised him to write. It was dated September 1st (the day after his breakup with McGrail) and headlined "Unrecognized Source of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* Discovered by California Scholar." The first paragraph read:

> Dr. Steve Sohmer, the internationally known novelist who holds a Doctorate in English from Oxford University, announced the discovery of a previously unrecognized source of William Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet*. While the title of the obscure 16th century biographical book remains a closely guarded secret, a small circle of specialist scholars already believes the book may deserve recognition as a source of the play.

In two following paragraphs, Sohmer paraphrases the discovery that McGrail was quick to credit him with: that Shakespeare, by setting the action on certain Catholic holy days that were considered dubious by Protestants, hinted at his theme—Luther's conflict with the Church. What Sohmer leaves out—but makes clear in an eight-page article that he posted on the Internet—is the real point of interest: that those holy days would have come up in the Church calendar on identical days in 1601, the possible year of "Hamlet" 's first performance, and 1517, the year Luther nailed his theses to the church door. The release itself is otherwise opaque.

Sohmer then began to give his version of how the summer with McGrail had started as an intellectually exciting discussion and ended in argument, threats, and legal action.

"On July 2nd, Mary Ann came here, and I said that I had decided to spend time on the calendrical design of 'Hamlet,' " Sohmer said. He went on to tell me that the search for that design had led to a biography of Luther that was available in English in Shakespeare's lifetime—a translation by one Henry Bennett of a Latin book, as Sohmer, late of Oxford, put it, "by a chap named Philipp Melanchthon." McGrail, in her work, had all but abandoned Melanchthon as a central source, and had concentrated on Foxe's "Actes and Monuments." Several times in more than three hours I spent with Sohmer, he mentioned Foxe, but only in passing. He seemed far more comfortable talking about the calendar and, to a lesser degree, Melanchthon.

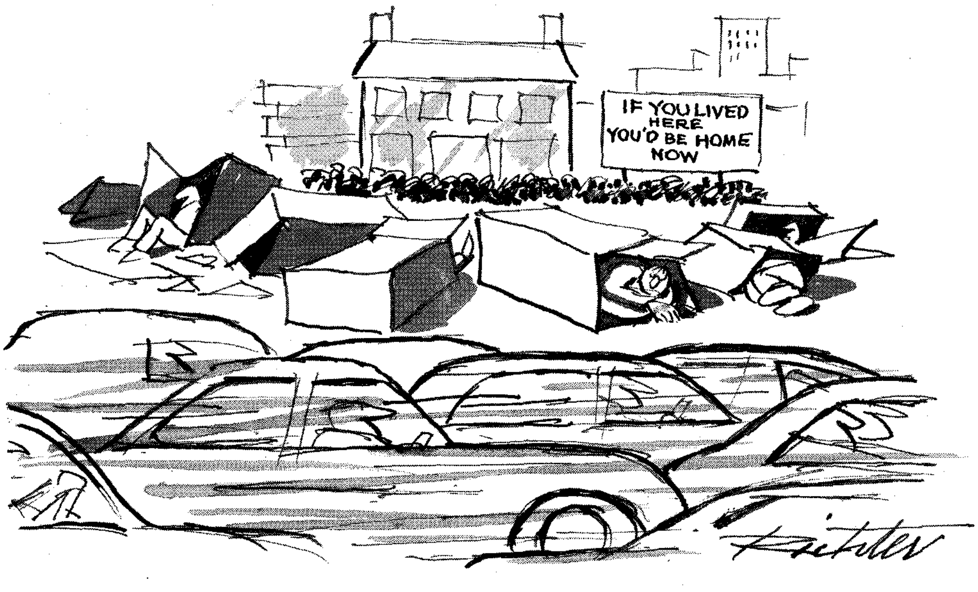
According to Sohmer, an Elizabethan audience would have been aware of the nuances of the calendar. By studying hints given in the play about various dates, Sohmer thinks he has also discovered what he calls "the single greatest mystery in Shakespeare"—that is, why Hamlet did not succeed to the throne after the death of his father. And the answer, which Sohmer explored even in his dissertation on "Julius Caesar," is that Hamlet was born before his parents married. He was illegitimate. Similarly, according to some accounts, Luther's mother could not remember the year of his birth—a notion "that stretches credulity," Sohmer says. "She can remember the hour and day of the birth, but not the year?" In one biography, written by Cochlaeus, a virulently anti-Luther Catholic priest, it is even suggested that Luther's mother coupled with a devil in a bathhouse. "I want to write a whole book about the calendrical aspects of 'Hamlet,' " Sohmer said. "A couple of months before Mary Ann showed up on July 2nd, I'd started writing a book called 'Luther at Elsinore.' "

Just as McGrail had been quick to credit Sohmer with doing the principal work on the calendar, Sohmer was quick to credit her with helping him on textual issues. But, like her, he had no doubt about who was in the lead. Both in conversation with me and, six weeks later, in deposition, Sohmer made several of the same general points about the parallels between Hamlet and Luther which McGrail had and claimed them as his ideas; namely, that Shakespeare's character makes a spiritual journey much like Luther's, that Shakespeare uses some of his characters to represent figures (such as Henry VIII) who take part in the Luther drama, and that Shakespeare raises some of the key religious debates of the Reformation in the play, including the debate over various sacraments and the existence of Purgatory. But Sohmer rolled his eyes at my suggestion that McGrail, whom he had been paying a hundred dollars an hour just a week before, was in any way his teacher, his tutor, or his superior.

"Mary Ann *started* as a tutor," he told me, leaning back in a huge upholstered desk chair. "Then there is an old saying: A student who does not surpass his master fails his master. I was the one who was really conducting the seminar on 'Hamlet.' "

"So then you are ahead of her on the study of 'Hamlet'?" I asked.

"I'm ahead of her—oh, by miles, on this subject." Later, he added, "The whole essence of the process shifted away from a tutorial process into a very


IF YOU LIVED HERE YOU'D BE HOME NOW

equal and collegial sort of relationship."

"If it was equal, then why pay her?"

"Because I thought she could use the money and I think she likes coming to California." For anyone to have failed to see that their relationship had changed, Sohmer said—well, that person would have to be "brain dead."

This seemed curious to me. Sohmer's academic career was, to put it mildly, only a budding one. His Oxford D.Phil. was of a few months' vintage. Sohmer has never taught Shakespeare. Where McGrail was defensive about her publishing record and determined to accelerate it, Sohmer, at fifty-three, seemed to consider himself a kind of boy wonder, able to take on the career of original scholar as a kind of entertainment, a lark. Sohmer seemed to be saying that it was as if his motives and interests were somehow purer than the average scholar's because he, as a wealthy man with "a real job," had no need to impress anyone but himself.

"After all, what do I get out of this?" he said. "I get bragging rights at the Bel Air Country Club, that's all it means to me, and they think I'm crazy over there anyway. I don't need the publication. I don't need the work. The other party does."

I could not quite fathom how Sohmer viewed McGrail's role. When I asked him, he struggled with an answer. "Mary Ann has been here as an employee," he said. "I don't think there is any dispute about whose intellectual property this is. What we're disputing is whether she could write about these things without sharing credit. The task I set out for us—and the kind of work I've been doing—is my intellectual property, not hers. I view her as a paid—I guess you'd say she was— I can't think. She wasn't a consultant or a researcher, although she did some of the grunt work."

When the subject turned to Sohmer's life, he stopped and said, "You want a bio? I got a bio!" He handed me a two-page, single-spaced document headed "Dr. Steve Sohmer," which began this way:

> Steve Sohmer leads multiple careers as a writer-producer, entertainment industry executive, novelist, and Shakespearean scholar. *As a writer-producer:* Since 1986, Steve has served as president of his own television production firm based in Los Angeles. In 1988 Steve created, wrote, and produced the NBC miniseries *Favorite Son*, starring Harry Hamlin and Linda Kozlowski. In 1989-90, Steve wrote and produced the high-rated NBC telefilm *Bloodknot*, starring Jaclyn Smith.

Since Sohmer was most completely the creator of "Favorite Son," I ran through some old reviews. The plot, in both the novel and the telefilm versions, concerns a dark-horse Vice-Presidential candidate who becomes a national hero when he is wounded during the assassination of a Nicaraguan Contra leader. While the *Times* television critic John J. O'Connor called it a "hard-driving political thriller," Tom Shales, the critic at the Washington *Post*, was less impressed: "One reason to watch the NBC miniseries 'Favorite Son'—and there really aren't that many—is to play a game of 'which scene is the ickiest?' A top contender comes early in the three-part, six-hour opus, when two FBI agents investigate a crime site. A dead woman is lying in a large pool of blood on the kitchen floor when a dog comes into the room and begins to lap at the puddle. The younger FBI agent vomits into the camera. The older one says he remembers a dog once urinating on a corpse. The younger man vomits again."

Sohmer mentioned more than once that "Favorite Son," the novel, had been translated into more than a dozen languages. He went on to say that reading Shakespeare had made him "a better writer," explaining, "I try to use the minor characters to mirror the major characters. Obviously, I can't do it as well as Shakespeare. No one can."

SOHMER seems to waver between an outsized ego and a disarming gift for self-deprecation. Even in his résumé he sees himself as a Renaissance man and does not hesitate to point out lesser literary accomplishments ("Steve created and wrote *Where the Fun Is*, Pan American Airways' annual student travel guide"). As a scholar who makes television shows for his fortune, he once told *Newsday*, he resembles "a man with a cholesterol problem who is running a cheese factory."

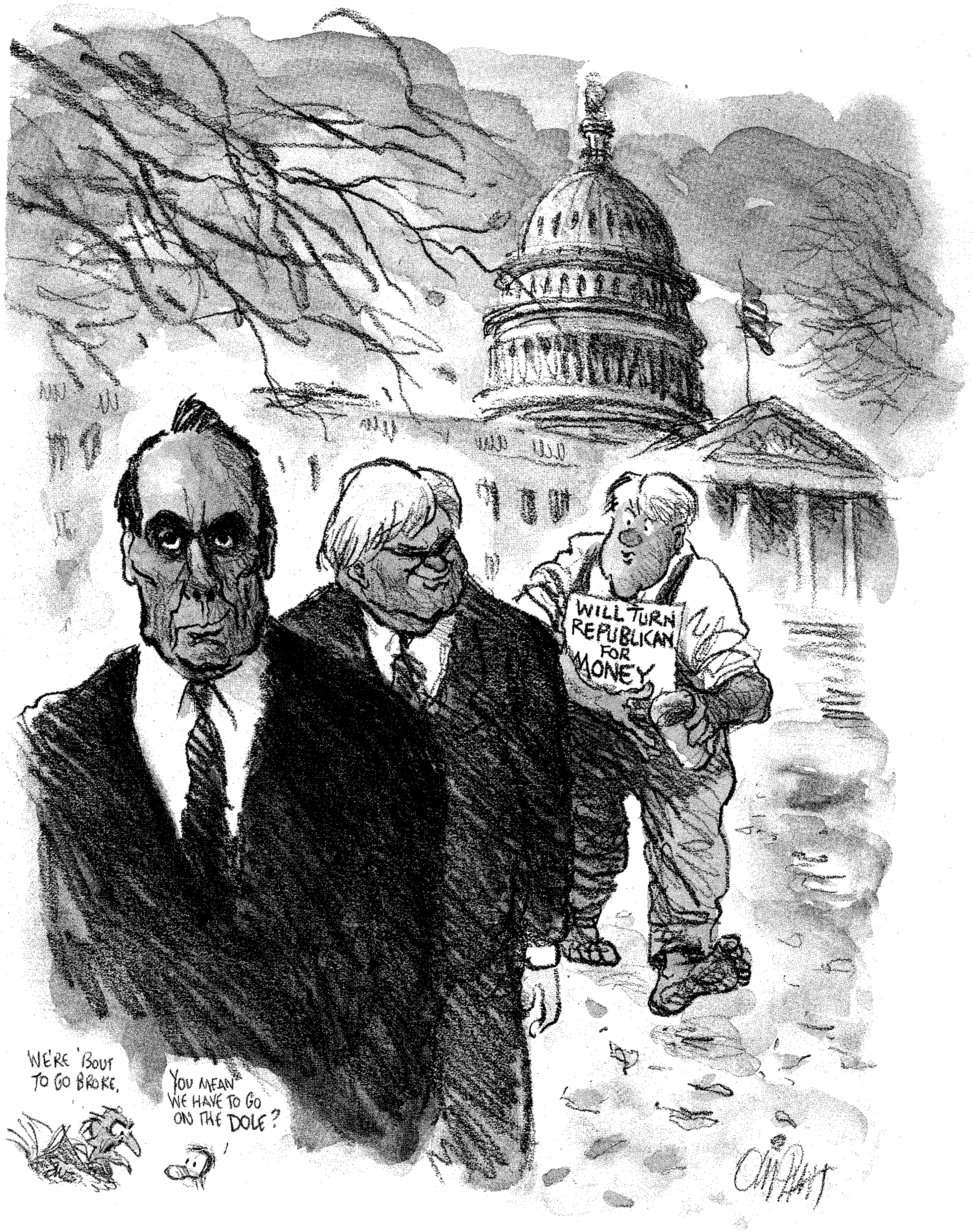
After talking to me for a while about his life, Sohmer described—as he would in his initial application for the temporary restraining order—the collapse of his collaboration and friendship with Mary Ann McGrail, what he saw as the series of betrayals that led to anger and heartbreak. In his telling, he was the generous patron betrayed, McGrail the ungrateful deceiver.

Sohmer said that as he was finishing his doctoral dissertation on the calendrical structure of "Julius Caesar" and the play's relation to the life of Christ, he began to focus, in May of 1995, on "Hamlet" and similar issues of time, festival days, and religious conflict.

The court papers lack none of the confidence that Sohmer reveals in personal conversation, and they benefit from greater concision. In his statement attached to the request for a temporary restraining order, he says that prior to McGrail's arrival in Los Angeles he "quickly realized that the play (Hamlet) had a calendrical structure that had never been detected by . . . scholars before." He goes on, "I also recognized that Shakespeare was writing about Martin Luther and reformation theology and the conflict between the reformers and the Catholic church. Although Edmond Malone first recognized . . . a connection between Hamlet and Wittenberg, Germany, which was Luther's university, I was the first to recognize that Shakespeare was examining Luther's theology of conversion and his relationship with the English King Henry VIII with whom Luther and his colleague, Phillip Melanchthon, corresponded in 1522-25. My recognition of the depth to which Shakespeare was exploring the life and theology of Luther through Hamlet is a significant and new theory which has never been recognized by Shakespearean scholars before." Sohmer then describes how McGrail was hired and paid "to assist me in my research into the calendrical and religious dimensions of Hamlet as I have discussed above." His statement then turns to the personal, an epic of disintegration: "This revelation that I made to Dr. McGrail," Sohmer says of his theory, "was conveyed in complete confidence outside of the presence of any other person or individual." He claims he told McGrail, at their first session this summer, that the theory was his own, and was confidential. The two then began to work their way through the play, line by line. Sohmer says he wrote an article on "Hamlet" and the calendar, completed by mid-July, for a British journal, *Notes and Queries*, and "as a courtesy to Dr. McGrail, I included both of our by-lines" before sending it off to Oxford.

I asked Sohmer when the con-

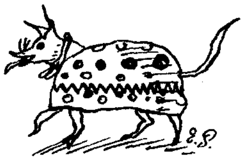
SKETCHBOOK · BY PAT OLIPHANT


WILL TURN REPUBLICAN FOR MONEY
WE'RE 'BOUT TO GO BROKE.
YOU MEAN WE HAVE TO GO ON THE DOLE?
OLIPHANT

flict over articles and publications came up.

"When we identified this Melanchthon and the passages in Foxe, Mary Ann proposed we write an article for the *Huntington Library Quarterly*," he said. "I thought that was a wonderful idea. A couple of days passed, and Mary Ann said, 'I think I should write this piece for the *Huntington Library Quarterly.*' I said, 'Why's that?' She said, 'Well, you don't want to do text editing, do you?' I said, 'Why not?' A couple of days later, she walked in and said, 'I've got a wonderful idea. Let's write a piece for the *Times Literary Supplement.*' I said fine, I'd write the part about the calendar and she'd write about the Melanchthon book or Foxe, or whatever. Then she said, 'It's got to be done by Tuesday.' This was all two and a half, three weeks ago—mid-August. I said, 'Why Tuesday? You've talked to someone about this, haven't you?' "

All the while, Sohmer testifies in the court document, he was growing more and more suspicious that McGrail was withholding information from him. He claims that at one point she said of herself that a collaboration wouldn't do her any good—meaning, he assumed, that it would not benefit her standing in the academic world or her quest for tenure at Boston University.



McGrail, for her part, told me she never wanted to collaborate with Sohmer and never led him to believe otherwise. In fact, she said, she never proposed an article to the *Huntington Library Quarterly;* she did invite him to submit a companion piece to her *T.L.S.* submission. In her court filings she denies Sohmer's claims on nearly every point.

"I wasn't castigating Mary Ann. I was pleading with her," Sohmer told me, in a wounded voice. "We have a unique working relationship—a professor and someone with no axe to grind, with no need of tenure or publications. I recognized this publication would be important for her. I said, You can have top billing and write the introduction. But to take work done in this room and at the Huntington—I paid you, I accepted you as a friend and as a member of the family, and then to take this idea and exploit it for your own benefit—well, the word might be 'ingratitude.' "

Sohmer sat for a while in silence. He stared at the television monitor above his desk. He puffed on his cigar. There were no unusual movements at his gate.

"You know something?" he said. "I wish we hadn't found this stuff. I wish we had worked on 'Antony and Cleopatra' instead of 'Hamlet.' Because, if we had, we'd still be sitting here talking about Shakespeare. Mary Ann would still be walking in here at eight o'clock with her coffee and we'd talk. You know, the journey is everything and the destination is nothing. Working on Shakespeare, it's also true. The destination means nothing. It's the pure excitement of study. The stakes for me have always been small. I never see the *T.L.S.* We don't take that. I've never even seen the *Huntington Library Quarterly.* What's it to me? If she had walked in and said, 'Please let me do it alone,' it would never have been an issue. How could I say no to a friend? But that's not how this happened. It happened after being told one thing and then another."

What, I asked, could have been McGrail's motive? Why would she possibly have betrayed him?

"My hunch is that this publish-or-perish thing may be at work here," Sohmer said. "There's an *x* factor here. That may be it."

I suggested to Sohmer that perhaps the dispute was unreal, even preposterous: while the two parties were agreed that there were Lutheran aspects to "Hamlet," the specifics of their work were not so much overlapping as contiguous. Sohmer was deep into his research on the calendar, and McGrail was working mainly on Foxe's "Actes and Monuments."

Sohmer replied that, if that was the case, it would come out in litigation.

Then Sohmer said he would soon be going out to the Huntington Library to work on the various editions of "Hamlet"—the First and Second Quartos, the First Folio—"if I ever get around to it. It's very tedious work."

I asked if he was working hard on the Luther biographies.

"I have started on the text, but I'm a long way from anywhere," Sohmer said. "The answer is, I'm nowhere on it."

SCHOLARS have been combing through Shakespeare's works for centuries. The growth in Shakespeare criticism is exponential. Thousands of articles, monographs, and books on Shakespeare are published every year. Critics of all schools are still searching for an answer to the question "Who is Shakespeare?" Is he primarily a man of the theatre, as he is in Bernard Beckerman's "Shakespeare at the Globe"? Is he a closet Catholic, as Eric Sams believes? Was he gay, as a number of critics of the Sonnets hold? Is he a writer obsessed with his position at court, as Alvin Kernan writes?

While it is certain that every age will produce its own interpretations, its own Shakespeare, it grows less and less likely that someone will come up with some sort of archeological find, a riddle answered. But still people try. Scholars are still poking around the question of authorship, the possibility that someone else—Bacon; or De Vere, the Earl of Oxford; or someone quite obscure—wrote one or more of the plays now attributed to Shakespeare.

Once in a great while, a scholar believes he has added to the existing Shakespeare canon by discovering a lost manuscript attributable to the Master. In 1985, Gary Taylor, now a professor at Brandeis University, did that when he found a poem in Oxford's Bodleian Library called "Shall I Die? Shall I Fly?" Taylor was convinced that the poem, though not an especially good one, was Shakespeare's. His discovery sparked much dissent and at least as much jealousy in the academic world—especially after it was publicized on the front page of the *Times.* A few years later, after the furor had subsided, he wrote an article for the *Times* recalling the strange interplay between scholarship and its interpretation in the press. "Literary scholarship, like journalism, is a competitive business," Taylor wrote. "New theories do not, and should not, win instant unanimous acceptance. So whenever a new theory is propounded, in literature or science, rival experts will leap to attack it. Every newborn theory has to fight for its life. That war of theories goes on all the time, whether or not journalists become involved. The press simply accelerates, exaggerates and personalizes the struggle."

For whatever reason, accelerating the struggle was undoubtedly McGrail's intention. It was McGrail's friend who,

"Hey! This is news."

• •

with McGrail's permission, had called *The New Yorker* in the first place. Had there been no dispute with Sohmer, she would have worked, written, and published at a more ordinary pace. Sohmer said he would have preferred that the matter stay private. "With all due respect, I wish you had kept your nose out of it," he told me.

After returning home from California, I asked some Shakespeare scholars what they thought of the idea of "Hamlet" under Luther's shadow. I thought, for example, that Berkeley's Stephen Greenblatt, founder of the New Historicism school of criticism, might not endorse such a reading, but in fact he was intrigued.

"Luther? I've been working on a little of that myself," he said. "I'm fascinated by Shakespeare's invoking Wittenberg, and I've been working on the theological implications of the use of the Eucharist: 'Not where he eats, but where a is eaten.' That moment after the killing of Polonius. It doesn't seem really new. It seems pleasantly old. People have been noodling around for years with phrases like 'hide Fox' and what they mean and what secrets they might possess, chewing on old bones and seeing what sort of marrow we can eke out."

Lawrence Danson, the Shakespearean at Princeton who had stayed at Sohmer's place in England, told me that McGrail and Sohmer, in their separate ways, were flirting with a potentially reductive theory. "Yes, of course Hamlet went to Wittenberg, but Marlowe's Dr. Faustus lived there, too. What then? The same with the calendar. With a capacious enough text, like 'Hamlet,' you can find almost anything you're looking for. If this kind of study is not done well, it runs the risk of bearing a resemblance to the ciphering of the text that some scholars do to 'prove' that Shakespeare never wrote the plays—that it was Bacon or someone else. It's like conspiracy thinking: you take a series of details—a fox, a series of dates—and you make a case. But how does that jibe with the rest of the play? Shakespeare does not operate that way. Why would he have shifted tactics this way? I'm skeptical, at best, but I look forward to reading their actual work."

I told Peter W. M. Blayney, a resident fellow at the Folger Shakespeare Library, in Washington, whose specialty is the printing trade in the age of Shakespeare, about McGrail's notion that Shakespeare wanted the animals capitalized in the Second Quarto as a way of emphasizing the Noah story and thus the link with Luther. He was not impressed. In Elizabethan printing houses, Blayney told me, capitalization was up to the compositor, and "personified abstractions"—the names of animals, plants, rocks, or minerals—were capitalized all the time. "Capitalized animals are virtually standard in printing houses of the time," Blayney said. "I don't know Mary Ann McGrail, but this is extremely far-fetched. It just doesn't sound as if she were within her area, here at least. . . . If there were any running imagery of Luther, I don't think it would be conducted in this manner."

Finally, I visited one of the leading young Shakespeareans, James Shapiro, who teaches at Columbia. He has spent a lot of time on "Actes and Monuments" and the religious atmosphere of post-Reformation England. We met at his apartment, on Riverside Drive, and he had ready a number of editions of "Hamlet."

As I went through points of the argument as McGrail had laid it out for me, Shapiro was both curious and skeptical. Because he is a scholar deeply interested in the religious aspects of the play and of the culture, he seemed to want the theory to make sense. But more often than not he shook his head and demanded that McGrail "put more pressure" on her own points: he wanted her to ask herself *why* Shakespeare would drop certain hints, use certain names. Too many points seemed contrived or coincidental, he said. McGrail, for example, argues that when Polonius gives Reynaldo money to take abroad and give to his son, Laertes, and, incidentally, see what sort of sins he is up to ("drinking, fencing, swearing, / Quarrelling, drabbing"), the scene is an echo of the Church's sending priests all over Europe to sell indulgences—Luther's great bugbear.

"There's just no evidence for that," Shapiro said. "Or not enough. So far, what I see is Polonius giving Laertes money for expenses."

As we went on, Shapiro was more interested in other points, such as "O reform it altogether." But over all he seemed dubious. McGrail, he concluded, was in far too early a stage of scholarship to be talking about theories with any confidence.

"Certain questions aren't being asked here," he said. "The first is about Shakespeare's handling of source material. Why is he dealing with Foxe differently from the way he dealt with Holinshed or Plutarch? In the history plays, he compresses dates, uses other sources, and so on, but here he seems to use it differently from the way he uses other

PIZZA
P. Steiner

historical biographies. Why? If he is using the Foxe—and I do believe Shakespeare was familiar with Foxe, at least some of it—I don't think he is using it as a source. But even if I did accept the argument, this is still not the way Shakespeare works through a plot. Shakespeare usually takes whole phrases, sentences—not just key words here or there. You can see the way he'll transform things wholesale. Why would he have to hide the Foxe? Is it because Shakespeare was more closely aligned with Lutheran than with Calvinist theology? If Shakespeare had been interested in Luther, he would have looked at a variety of sources. He was never satisfied with the first version that crossed his path."

What worried Shapiro most about McGrail's approach was its emphasis on riddles and hints. He said that there has always been a tendency in Shakespeare studies for certain scholars to see what they wanted to see in a play, finding buried puns and anagrams to "prove," say, that Francis Bacon wrote the work. "With enough inventiveness," Shapiro said, "almost anything can be argued about Shakespeare's plays—and most of it has been." Just this year, he noted, two highly respected scholars, Alvin Kernan and Eric Mallin, have published separate books arguing that the story of Hamlet parallels not the Luther story but, rather, that of James himself, the king-in-waiting.

"Don't get me wrong," Shapiro said. " 'Hamlet' comes at the height of Shakespeare's powers, and so that Reformation context would have to be there. People are reading Foxe now, and it is a serious topic that has been overlooked for a long time."

Even if McGrail's work is finally dismissed in its particulars, it represents a renewed interest in the religious dimensions of Shakespeare. The New Critics—the generation of Cleanth Brooks, Harry Levin, and Robert B. Heilman, who dominated the forties and fifties—emphasized language above all; the text as a self-contained unit, the well-wrought urn. The New Historicists and their British cousins, the Cultural Materialists, came of age in the sixties and seventies and now tend to dominate Shakespeare studies; their focus is on the mediating factor of history, and they are especially attuned to race, class, gender, and power relations. Members of that generation have been more secular in outlook and less focussed on religion. Scholars of McGrail's generation—the generation from twenty-five to forty-five—are adding religion to the historical view of the plays.

Shapiro said he hoped that both McGrail and Sohmer would give up the hunt for the "holy grail" of a lost biographical source and concentrate more on the way Shakespeare may have been taking a position on the religious controversies of Elizabethan England. McGrail's theological hunches have the "strong ring of truth, but rewriting cultural history is a slow, laborious affair," Shapiro said. "There are no shortcuts, no huge discoveries. It's not about individuals like Luther, but about more complicated cultural shifts."

About Sohmer's work on the calendar, Shapiro was no less skeptical. If too much of Sohmer's work depends on establishing that the first performance of "Hamlet" was in 1601, then "it's like building oceanfront property in California: sooner or later the whole edifice will be washed away." As Sohmer himself acknowledges, there is still a great controversy over the dating of the play.

Shapiro and I walked up 116th Street and across the Columbia campus to his office. As we passed the library, I told him about the conflict between Sohmer and McGrail.

"An intellectual-property dispute over this is hilarious," he said. "In fact, it's sad." The norm in Shakespeare studies, he added, is to circulate ideas, to discuss things openly, to collaborate—and may the best scholarship prevail.

"You know, it's funny, but Shakespeare was litigious himself," Shapiro said. "He was a killer businessman, who never cut anyone any slack on loans or business arrangements. This was an especially litigious period of history, and Shakespeare was completely wrapped up in that. He moved from Stratford to London, but he was very careful about keeping up with his real-estate interests in the country. Even the creation of the Globe Theatre involved a huge legal battle, which had workmen dismantling the theatre at night and dragging the pieces across the frozen Thames because the lease on the land had run out. Rather than let the landlord reuse the timbers, they took them across the river and constructed the Globe. So this is not the first time the Shakespeare world has been recorded in the annals of law."

IN the weeks that followed, I spoke with McGrail and Sohmer periodically, both to talk about Shakespeare and to follow the course of their dispute.

McGrail had neither the resources nor the ability to affect an aura of calm. In the first days of the case, she had spent more than ten thousand dollars on legal costs. Scared and broke, she stayed with friends for a while and then left Los Angeles for nearly a week in mid-September, in part to avoid being served with an injunction by Sohmer's lawyers.

She travelled first to Vancouver, to lecture on "Hamlet," then to Boston, to get advice from Lloyd Weinreb, a professor of copyright law at Harvard Law School, and then to Washington to visit her parents and friends. Weinreb recommended a lawyer named Michael Doyen to represent her pro bono in Los Angeles and told her that Sohmer's case was completely groundless. (Doyen, who took on the case after my reporting began, recently represented this magazine in a lawsuit.) Weinreb said in an affidavit, and in a conversation with me, that Sohmer's lawyers were improperly regarding McGrail as an employee who had betrayed commercial secrets, whereas in fact she was, strictly speaking, an independent contractor, working part time. The ideas at issue were just that—ideas, not trade secrets. The key legal point, Weinreb continued, is that ideas are not intellectual property, and no court would consider them so. Sohmer's suit, he said, was "frivolous." McGrail said that Sohmer was waging against her an "effective campaign of intimidation."

As the autumn wore on and the lawsuits lingered, McGrail seemed to feel the burden of her scholarship almost as much as the burden of the legal case. In a field as vast and passionate as Shakespeare studies, she could not expect a warm and easy welcome. What she considered daring could well end up condemned as marginal, a failed attempt. Not long ago, in a critical review of yet another reading of Shakespeare, the veteran critic Frank Kermode wrote, as much in sympathy as in reproach, "Finding something new, true, and useful to say about Shakespeare is a task so formidable that one can only wonder why so many keen and eager spirits compete for the privilege of attempting it."

When I asked Sohmer what sort of reaction he got to his work after he sent it out over the Internet, he said, "I've gotten the electronic equivalent of blank stares."

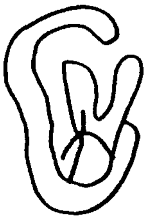
After a month of legal wrangling between the lawyers on both sides, with the case shifting between courthouses, Sohmer showed no sign of letting up. One of his lawyers, Ronald Lewis, told me that the case was a rather simple matter. "Look," he said. "If Albert Einstein comes up with $E=mc^2$ and then he asks a couple of professors to go to the blackboard and work out a proof, who's the one who thought up the formula?"

In letters to McGrail's side, Sohmer and his lawyers said that a settlement would have to include an apology and a promise not to publish for eighteen months. Then Sohmer made another offer. When McGrail's lawyers deposed Sohmer in mid-October, he faced his antagonist. He offered to drop his lawsuit if McGrail agreed to collaborate with him on a book about "Hamlet" and Luther. She angrily rejected the offer.

At one point in the deposition, Doyen, McGrail's lawyer, suggested on his client's behalf that Sohmer and McGrail have a private conversation. McGrail and Sohmer agreed. After the conversation, McGrail declined to talk about the meeting, other than to say it was "unpleasant."

Sohmer said that when the two of them were left alone McGrail seemed "distraught."

"In a loud and desperate voice, she said, 'What is going on here?' I said, 'What do you mean?' And she said, 'What are we doing in this lawyer's office?' I said, 'Mary Ann, I told you when you pursued this course of action what would ensue.' She then told me a story about how she discovered the Melanchthon biography, which is completely false. I listened to her, and when she finished, I said, 'Do you really believe what you are saying?'



"Suddenly she went through what seemed like an enormous mood swing. She clutched her hands together and said, 'I've been such a good teacher, I've been so generous. This is *my* world.' I said, 'I can't continue this conversation.' And I got to my feet. Now, the geography of the room was such that I was on one side of the table and she was on the other, with the doorway to the hall behind her. I took a step to my left to get to the door. She got to her feet and stood in the doorway. I was alarmed. I said, 'Mary Ann, I'm leaving the room. Get out of the doorway.' She kept talking, some kind of vitriol. I said again, 'Mary Ann, I'm leaving the room, get out of the doorway.' And with that she tore the door open and ran down the hallway.

"Later, I told Doyen, 'Look, I appreciate your letting me talk to Mary Ann. I had no idea how this was affecting her. I want to reconsider the matter.' "

McGrail said that she never blocked the doorway, and that she did not run—she "walked quickly."

In late October, I asked Sohmer if he had indeed reconsidered. He said he had thought it through and could see "no other course" than to pursue the case. "Look, this is my hobby," he told me at one point. "These are my boats and bottles, and someone's thrown my boats and bottles on the floor. It's like when I was growing up and going to some bar in Queens and there would be guys there arguing passionately about the merits of Johnny Mize and they'd have a lump in their pants. They loved it! That's how I feel about arguing about 'Hamlet.' "

In the first week of November, Sohmer reconsidered once more. He decided to drop his suit, and McGrail, in turn, dropped hers. Sohmer said he had his reasons but did not want to discuss them. The terms of the agreement were simple: no further action, with both sides free to publish. McGrail, who had lost her savings and two nerve-shattering months, would have preferred vindication in court, but she was relieved, all the same. "Mr. Sohmer, caught in a mousetrap, clearly realized he was wrong," she said. "What's of genuine interest is the discovery about Shakespeare."

As for Sohmer, he was reading various biographies of Luther, but mostly he was trying to write television programs. "It's the pilot season, and pari passu"—he says "pari passu" more often than William F. Buckley, Jr.—"and pari passu I'm trying to work on the material about 'Hamlet.' " Sohmer said he was now rebuilding his scholarly team. He had hired a Latinist to do some translating. Someone on his staff was already doing library work for him. And now he was on the lookout for a new Renaissance scholar. "I need someone to replace Mary Ann," he said. ♦

PROFILE

THE BEATLES' STRAIGHT MAN

George Martin was never just the posh producer who introduced the Beatles to the oboe. Since the sixties, he has established a small business empire. But he spent much of the past year back in the Abbey Road archives, sifting through Beatles outtakes, and reliving the highs and lows of the most famous studio collaboration in pop history.

BY GILES SMITH

WHEN people talk about the record producer George Martin, who made a good decision when he offered a recording contract to a pop group called the Beatles, he is described, sooner or later (usually sooner), as "a gentleman." Many things about Martin fit the term: a distinguished bearing (at sixty-nine, he is still tall, handsome, and graceful), a kindly demeanor (he is able to put people immediately at ease, a gift handy both in social settings and in recording studios), his wardrobe (he favors proper ties and blazers), and his voice (posh, very British, and redolent of unflinching R.A.F. officers circa 1944). Yet the work that Martin accomplished with the Beatles between 1962 and 1969 places him at the heart of the pop-culture revolution of the sixties, which is, perhaps, an odd place to find a gentleman. In particular, it is an odd place to find a gentleman with an aptitude for and a schooling in classical music. As a young man, Martin had been a student of the oboe, of composition, and of conducting at the Guildhall School of Music, in London. He became the head of EMI's Parlophone label at the age of twenty-nine, and might have spent the rest of his career releasing symphonies, concertos, children's music, and comedy records. Instead, he fell in with John, Paul, George, and Ringo, and earned musical immortality through the impact of his coaching and shaping, his presence in the texture of the Beatles' sound.

The Beatles called Martin "the Duke of Edinburgh." When Martin auditioned the band for Parlophone, in 1962, he was thirty-six, roughly a decade and a half their senior—nearly old enough to be their father. George Harrison's first remark to Martin at that audition was "Well, I don't like your tie, for a kickoff." But if the four Liverpudlians thought they could rattle this erect, well-mannered, impeccably groomed recording executive they were mistaken.

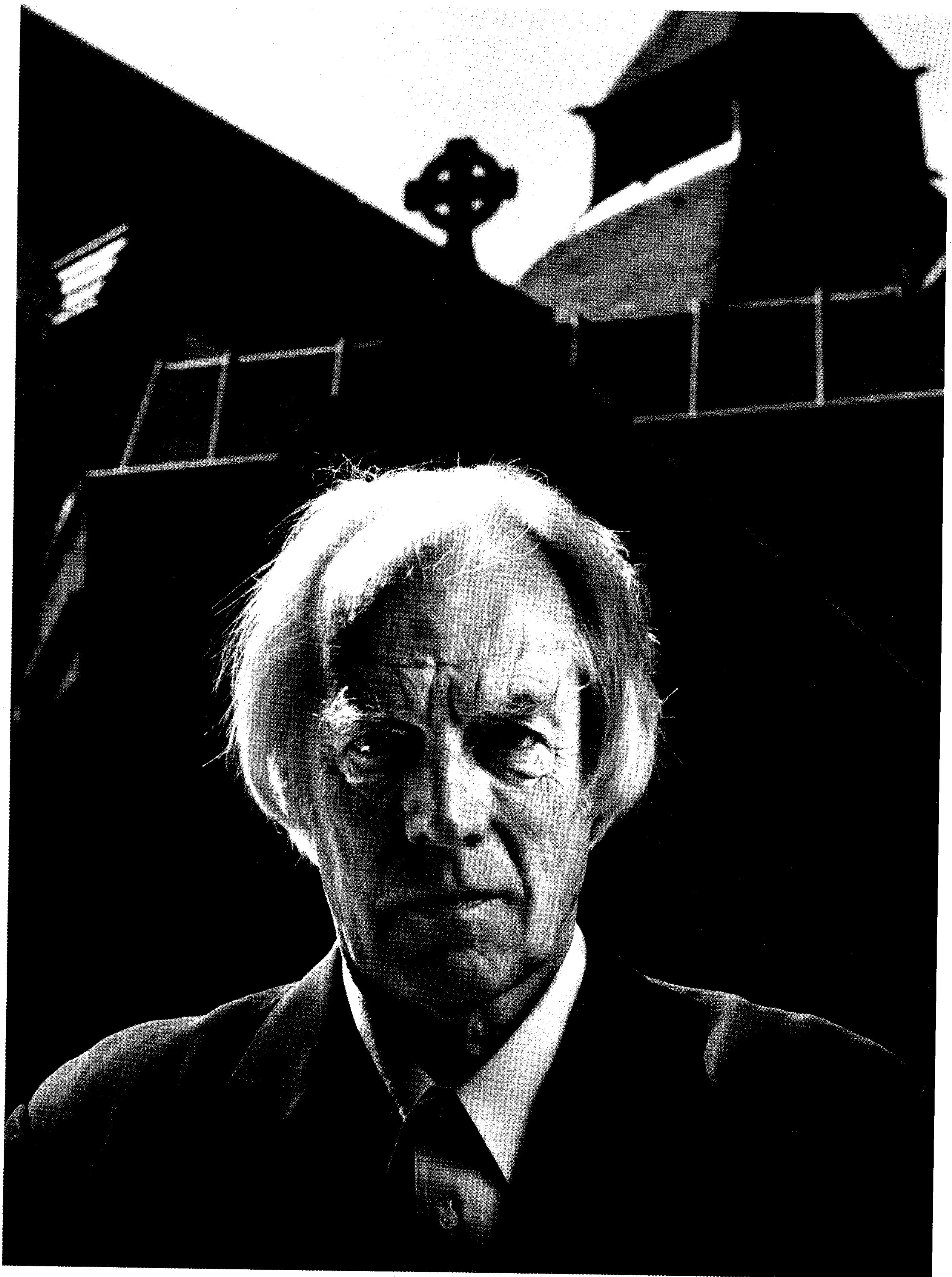
When Beatlemania overwhelmed the band, George Martin stayed calm. As the psychedelic era took over the Beatles' minds and wardrobes, their producer continued to keep a clear head and wear cufflinks. Martin is one of the few significant contributors to the sixties' pop explosion who politely declined all mind-expanding substances. When John Lennon, who by his own admission was taking LSD pretty much daily for a time in the mid-sixties, handed Martin a mysterious capsule and said, "This'll do you wonders," Martin's response was to deliver it safely to his doctor, and the doctor promptly confiscated it.

Martin has never got over the strangeness of his fate. "I feel phony about it," he told me in July. "I'm not a rock-and-roll person." This last assertion was hard to dispute at the time: we were sitting in Martin's London flat, midmorning, sharing coffee with warmed milk that Martin had prepared, and some biscuits that he had arranged carefully on a plate.

Still, Martin's version of gentlemanly conduct embraces the right to cut loose every now and again. Gerry Beckley, a member of the pop group America, for whom Martin produced six albums in the seventies, remembers recording a song called "Hollywood," which required the noise of a party in the background. An impromptu gathering was staged in the studio. "George was not satisfied with its liveliness," Beckley says, "so to get everyone to whoop it up he came out into the sound room and performed a striptease down to his shorts." A photograph from 1964 shows Martin standing in a studio at Abbey Road, EMI's legendary recording facility, with a tuba on his head and a composed expression on his face. It is a picture of someone who is well aware of how closely absurdity stalks decorum.

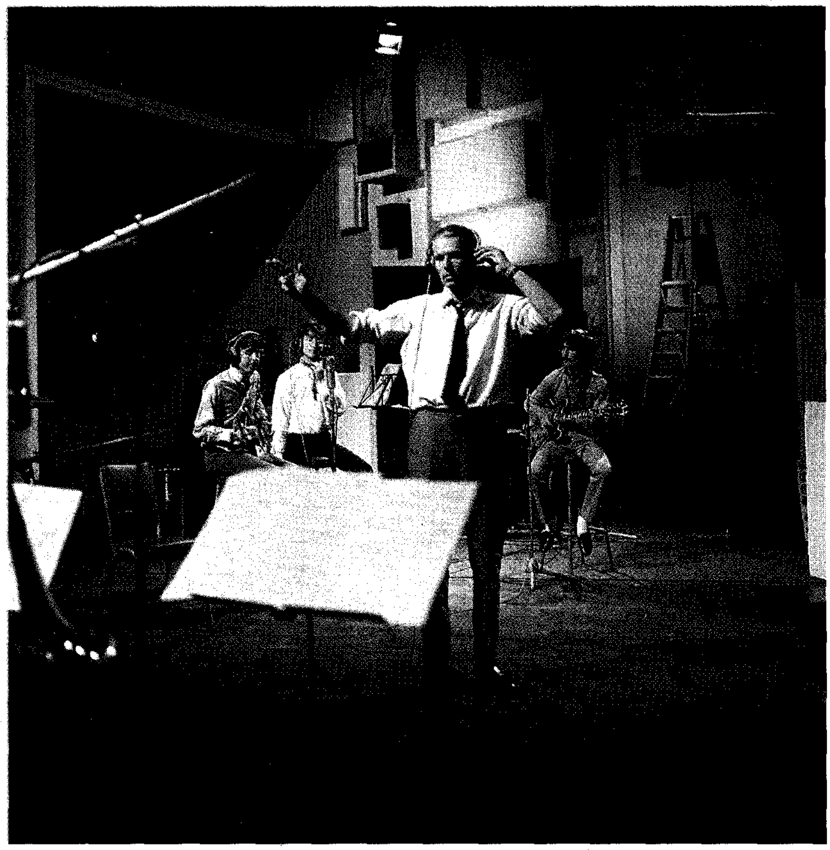
According to the songwriter Jimmy Webb, who commissioned Martin to produce one of his albums in the mid-seventies, the producer's staid image is "a disguise." Between recording sessions, Webb had an opportunity to see the combination of playfulness and intensity that had served Martin well in the sixties. "We would get into these paper-plane-making contests in the hallway, and take turns seeing whose plane would go the farthest," Webb says. "This became enormously competitive until one day when I walked into the studio and found that George had fastidiously constructed a virtually exact scale model of a sailplane, with tapered wings, airfoils and flaps, landing gear, and a cockpit. It travelled the length of the hallway and executed a perfect three-point landing, breaking all previous records. And he turned to me and said, 'Well, that's that, I think.' "

GEORGE MARTIN has spent much of 1995 working with the Beatles again. Since January, under a joint commission from EMI Records, which owns the rights to the Beatles' recordings, and Apple Corps, the Beatles' holding company, he has travelled to Abbey Road Studios several days a week, and has sorted through more than four hundred hours of Beatles tapes, with a view to assembling a kind of alternative history of the Beatles. He has listened for interesting outtakes, versions of songs which never made it to the final cut, unfamiliar variations on the familiar. "For instance, with 'Yesterday' there were only two takes, and on the second I overdubbed a string quartet," Martin told me. "But Take 1 is a lovely performance by Paul. The introduction is slightly different and the performance is almost innocent, because he's not trying to make a master—he's just demonstrating the song." Martin is compiling six CDs'



When I'm sixty-nine: "Only George could have come out of this having pleased everybody." Photograph by Helmut Newton.

worth of such rarities, and the first of three two-disk volumes of "The Beatles Anthology" will be released on November 20th. (The second and third pairs of CDs are scheduled for release in 1996.) A global promotional blitz is under way, with the hoopla pegged to the arrival of a new Beatles single and the broadcast of a six-hour television documentary, produced by the Beatles themselves. ABC will present the documentary in prime time on November 19th, 22nd, and 23rd.



In the studio, 1967: *"I thought 'Pepper' was the beginning of something," Martin says. "I thought we could go on from there. But it wasn't to be."*

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The preparation of the "Anthology" CDs has taken place under conditions of secrecy more commonly associated with papal elections. The hysteria centers particularly on the new single, "Free as a Bird," which is based on an unfinished Lennon recording from the late seventies. Earlier this year, McCartney, Harrison, and Starr simulated a Beatle reunion by adding instrumentation and vocals to it at McCartney's studio, in Sussex, England. Martin had no part in the production of "Free as a Bird." "I was a little uncomfortable about it," he told me. "I didn't like Natalie Cole singing 'Unforgettable' with her dead father. But Paul said to me, 'It's the only way the Beatles can make a new record. Without John being somehow involved, it wouldn't be the Beatles.' Having heard the result, I think it's a very good record. Well worth it." The song is included on Volume 1 of "The Beatles Anthology." Another unreleased Lennon track, "Real Love," also with new backing by the other Beatles, will appear on the second volume of "Anthology" CDs.

Martin made it clear to me that he was forbidden to let me hear "Free as a Bird" and most of the other finished material from the "Anthology" disks. He was, however, prepared to show me the room at Abbey Road Studios that he was working in, and the curious tools that he was using to bring the project together. One morning, shortly before eleven, we left Martin's flat, in a Regency-mansion block in Lancaster Gate, climbed into his car, a Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit, and set off on the ten-minute drive to Abbey Road Studios. Martin was wearing a navy blazer, a crisp white shirt, and an undemonstrative blue tie. Soon we were turning left through the studio gates, just a few feet away from the crosswalk that appears on the cover of "Abbey Road."

Mixing was taking place in a small, windowless, and slightly orange-lit room at the top of a steep flight of stairs. Geoff Emerick, who was the engineer on a substantial portion of the Beatles' records, was already at work. A tape turned at the back of the room, and the voice of the late John Lennon flooded, unaccompanied, from the speakers, singing "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away," from the 1965 album "Help!" Martin handed me the vintage tape box, which was housed in a brand-new, stiff clear-plastic sheath and bore the original labelling, with its bold "EMITAPE" logo and its handwritten details of the track title, the various takes, and their timings.

Martin said that in this labor of excavation and renovation he was intent on avoiding anachronisms. He wanted none of the "wrong coloration" that modern equipment might bring to the sound. EMI had supplied him with a primitive mixing board of gray metal, not much bigger than a kitchen stove. There were disquietingly few switches, dials, and sliders. It dawned on me that some of the most significant popular music of the twentieth century had been made using something apparently unearthed from an archeological dig. Martin also managed to persuade EMI to restore the studio's echo chamber; with the arrival of digital echo generators, the space had been converted into a storeroom for unwanted electrical gear.

Revisiting the past was not an undilutedly pleasurable experience for Martin. It cast him back to the blissful early days, of "A Hard Day's Night" (1964) and "Rubber Soul" (1965), when he took Lennon and McCartney's implausibly brilliant songs, formed them into bright, immutable pop records, and watched the Beatles become the most successful pop group in the world; and it cast him back to the glories of the middle period, of "Revolver" (1966) and "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" (1967), when, as the Beatles' competence and ambition ballooned, he was forced to meet their demands for ever more far-flung instrumentation and ever wilder experiment. But revisiting the past also meant returning to the dark late period, to the rambling, unfocussed sessions for "The Beatles" (the 1968 double-LP known as "The White Album") and "Let It Be" (recorded in 1969 but released in 1970), where, with the Beatles divided among themselves and the air crackling with acrimony, Martin found himself a helpless and peripheral figure. Hearing the tapes "was traumatic at times," Martin said. "It was sad and happy and funny and miserable—all those things."

Now and then, over the summer, one or more of the Beatles would stop by. "Paul would come in and listen with me, and we would become hugely nostalgic together," Martin said. "On a couple of occasions, Ringo and George joined us, and there were just the four of us sitting in Studio Two at Abbey Road."

The "Anthology" project handed Martin a potentially incendiary political responsibility. Not only did he have to please EMI but his proposed version had to pass the scrutiny of McCartney, Harrison, and Starr, and also of Yoko Ono, the controller of the John Lennon estate, in New York. Relations among these four are clearly more amicable in 1995 than they have been at any other point since the Beatles' ugly fracturing, in 1970. Even so, there were old wounds that could have easily been reopened by debates over what material this portrait of the Beatles' history should include and what it should leave out. Behind the project, moreover, loomed years of litigation between Apple Corps and EMI. The labyrinthine court battle was finally resolved in 1989. Clearly, the "Anthology" project called for someone with both diplomatic aplomb and authority, someone who had managed to maintain a cordial relationship with all parties. In the end, after minimal intervention by Ono and the three surviving Beatles, Martin's work received everyone's enthusiastic approval. Mark Lewisohn, who acted as a consultant during the preparation of the "Anthology" disks, told me, "Only George could have come out of this having pleased everybody, and with nobody cursing him under their breath."

GEORGE MARTIN may possess the kind of accent that suggests he inherited it, but it cost him years of effort to acquire. He was born in 1926, the son of a carpenter from North London. He didn't hear a playback of his speech until he was sixteen, when he visited a studio in central London to make, for his own pleasure, a lacquer recording of a piece he had composed for piano. Out of "sheer pomposity," Martin says, he closed the recording with an announcement: "You have been listening to 'Fantasy in D Minor,' by George Martin." He was so appalled by what he heard, he says—dissonant working-class vowels marred by absent consonants—that he accused the studio engineer of trickery. Then he set about mending the way he spoke, and he continued that project into his military service in the Fleet Air Arm. By 1945, when he was discharged, his origins were barely audible.

Martin moved from one more or less dispiriting job to another. He was a clerk in the BBC music library, and he picked up work as an oboe player, which included stints playing on bandstands in parks. In 1948, he married a young woman named Sheena Chisholm. Two years later, at the recommendation of Sidney Harrison, a professor at the Guildhall School, Oscar Preuss, the head of EMI's Parlophone label, appointed Martin his assistant, with particular responsibility for the classical catalogue. Martin learned how to record orchestras. Gradually, he became involved in some of the label's other specialties: jazz, children's music, and comedy. No work could have toned him up more efficiently for the Beatles.

In a startlingly short time, Martin was devising and making records on his own initiative. In 1952, he suggested to the actor Peter Ustinov that they collaborate on a comedy project. Ustinov wrote and recorded a three-minute spoof of a Mozart opera, singing all the parts. The resulting recording, "Mock Mozart," is a hilarious piece of surreal nonsense, with Ustinov trilling, barking, and gibbering with incomprehensible excitement. "I presented it at the monthly meetings where all records were discussed," Martin says. "The EMI people thought I had gone round the loop. It was just cacophony to them. They had so little confidence that they ordered an initial pressing of only three hundred copies." Ustinov says, "I didn't think it was an act of madness. I thought it was an act of bravura. But then bravura takes away all sense of the madness in things." Within a week, demand forced another pressing. "We sold a few thousand," Martin says. "It was a little victory."

When Oscar Preuss retired, in 1955, EMI appointed Martin his successor. At twenty-nine, he was the youngest label head in the company's history. Other British labels were then thriving on glamorous American pop catalogues. Parlophone had little more than an archive of dusty German classical recordings. "I had to make the label successful without the help of big stars, so I had to find my own stars," Martin says. "The way I did it was to choose a byway, and that was comedy."

A decade before the Beatles walked into his studio, Martin was a determined seeker after the distinctively British. Ron Goodwin, a composer and conductor who worked with Martin extensively during the fifties, remembers travelling with him to the Isle of Wight to meet with Uffa Fox, who was Prince Philip's yachtsman and a singer of sea chanteys, many of them bawdy. This meeting was to result in the Martin-produced album "Uffa Sings." Fox greeted Martin and Goodwin covered in soot and blood, the result of an accident in which a cannon that Fox had fired from the shore to salute their arriving ferry had exploded in his face. "That was the kind of person who interested George," Goodwin says.

Commercial success in such ventures was not always guaranteed. "An Evening of British Rubbish," an album that Martin recorded in the mid-fifties with a cabaret act called the Alberts, was largely overlooked at the time—and, indeed, since. But in 1959, Martin entered the charts with a Peter Sellers comedy album impudently entitled "The Best of Sellers." One sketch, called "A Drop of the Hard Stuff," is a mock field recording of an Irish folk-music session, and it closes with escalating chaos that leads to an enormous explosion. The sketch is extremely funny; it is also a forerunner of the orchestral crisis and the thunderous end note of "A Day in the Life." Around the same time, Martin scored a hit with John Dankworth's "Experiments with Mice," a set of jazz parodies on the tune "Three Blind Mice." "George was not hip," Dankworth recalls. "But he was hip enough to be able to make great successes."

In 1961, Martin separated from Sheena Chisholm. (They had two children: Bundi, christened Alexis, who lives in London, and Poggy, christened Greg, who is an actor living in Los Angeles.) Martin moved into a flat with his father, in Marylebone. It may not be insignificant that on the eve of the Beatles' arrival at Abbey Road Martin became a single man who was able to devote to the group whatever time it needed.

BRIAN EPSTEIN, the Beatles' manager, took the band to Abbey Road for its audition with Parlophone Records on June 6, 1962. Martin, who had entrusted the recording session to his assistant, Ron Richards, was in the canteen at the time, but when the Beatles played a song of their own called "Love Me Do" someone decided he should be fetched.

In his autobiography, "All You Need Is Ears," published in 1979, Martin writes of the Beatles, "My first impression was that they were all quite clean." Looking back now, he sees additional reasons he was drawn to them. "I was in the Fleet Air Arm when I was seventeen, married when I was twenty-two. I didn't have the fun of being a wild, harum-scarum person. So I guess that when the Beatles came along I saw a means of doing that—not actually doing it but a vicarious way of enjoying it with them." They quickened him professionally, too. As Martin puts it, "The obvious was the last thing they wanted. Ever."

In the early days, Martin would sit on a stool in the studio and listen as Lennon and McCartney ran new songs by him. In a sense, it was Martin's happy job, as producer, to recognize the potency that was inherently there and to point a microphone at it. But it was also his job to isolate that potency and to distill it—to get the details right. It was Martin's idea to spring forward with the chorus of "Can't Buy Me Love," so that the song opens with it. In its earliest form, "Please Please Me" was a mid-tempo ballad, conceived by Lennon to be sung in the style of Roy Orbison. Martin sent the group away to speed it up. When they returned to the studio nine weeks later, "Please Please Me" sounded like a teen-age adrenaline rush. "Congratulations, gentlemen," Martin said over the talkback at the conclusion of the recording. "You have just recorded your first No. 1."

Initially, Martin's relationship with the Beatles was that of a schoolmaster with his pupils. When the Beatles stood Martin up for a recording session during a promotional visit to Paris in January, 1964, his angry response was to take a taxi to their hotel and round them up. He found the Beatles sitting around in their suite drinking tea, and when he entered they ran, giggling, to hide behind furniture and under cushions; at that point, his anger evaporated. They accompanied him back to the studio, and there, among other things, they began recording "Can't Buy Me Love."

The Beatles were veteran performers, schooled in the dives of Liverpool and Hamburg, but they were studio novices, dependent upon Martin for guidance in the strange, faintly antiseptic surroundings of Abbey Road. The Beatles, however, were not the kind of people to allow themselves to feel alienated anywhere for very long. "They wanted to learn everything, and they were so quick," Martin says. He began to teach himself guitar. "These were guitarists I was dealing with, and I wanted to be able to communicate with them directly," he says. "But it was useless. They learned keyboard much faster than I learned guitar."

Soon the band was challenging Martin to go beyond making arrangements for a simple rock quartet, and was offering him more substantial material than teen rockers and heartthrob ballads. Martin himself played the twirling, virtuosic harpsichord break in the middle of Lennon's meditative "In My Life." (The break was actually performed on a piano, and its sound was then speeded up.) And he scored the strings for McCartney's "Yesterday," without vibrato and precisely in accord with how much emotional weight that essentially humble song can bear. Those strings mark the entry of classical orchestration into the Beatles' music, an advance that led to the ominous, bouncing cellos beneath Lennon's "Strawberry Fields Forever" and to the magnificent coda of "A Day in the Life." By 1966, the Beatles, who had dived head first into the counterculture and were wearing ever more elaborate mustaches and costumes, began to push Martin to find them instruments from still further outside the boundaries of pop—piccolo trumpets, clarinets, dilrubas, svaramandalas—and to press him for tricks with sound montage and tape manipulation.

Martin was able to answer McCartney's precise requests and also to figure out Lennon's vaguenesses. "Paul would say, 'I think it might be an idea to use cellos, to get a kind of bitey sound on the bottom end, or use a tinkly sound like a celesta.' John would just say he wanted 'a misty sound,' or 'How about a green thing over it?' It was all very esoteric. And there wouldn't be any point in going back to him and saying, 'Come off it, give me some real meat.' Because he did think in terms of internal visions, and he did live in a kind of dream world."

To the Beatles, Martin must have seemed like an island of normalcy. The four young men were almost terrifyingly famous. They were also locked into a global rivalry with the Beach Boys and Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones (none of whom, incidentally, had in their lives the equivalent of a Martin figure). The rivalries failed to touch their producer. "I don't think I thought about the Rolling Stones much," Martin told me. "I never went to any of their concerts. I didn't much go to any of these things." Martin was simply priceless to the Beatles: he could tune out the noise. In 1965, as Beatlemania raged, Martin, with a heroic sense of proportion, found time to enter Abbey Road with Peter Sellers and record a set of Beatles spoofs, including "Help!" delivered as a sermon in the voice of a lisping clergyman and "A Hard Day's Night" in Sellers' impression of the maddened staccato bark of Olivier playing Richard III. ("It has been a hard day's night!" Sellers shouts. "And I have been working like a dog!")

Perhaps inevitably, the Beatles eventually began to shake Martin off. A barely contained rebelliousness was part of their relationship with him from the start. And if the whole of the Beatles' career can be read as a struggle to be free of restraints (and, finally, to be free of one another) then this process would include, in the end, becoming free of George Martin.

"I thought 'Pepper' was the beginning of something," Martin told me. "I thought we could go on from there. But it wasn't to be." The band was losing its focus, and drifting musically. In 1968, a not untypical Abbey Road session started at seven in the evening and wound up at three in the morning. Mark Lewisohn, in his book "The Complete Beatles Recording Sessions," notes that on July 15, 1968, the Beatles filled four thirty-minute tapes while rehearsing a single song, "Cry Baby Cry."

As the Beatles came apart, Martin's relationship with Lennon, in particular, suffered. At the start of the sessions for "Let It Be," Lennon, apparently unable to contemplate further collaborative interference, told Martin that he wanted "none of your jiggery-pokery." Martin recalls, "John became more remote, more detached, and I found it very difficult to communicate with him. I think drugs did have a very bad effect on him. We didn't have much in common and we tended not to speak to each other at the end. It wasn't the happiness that we had together during 'Strawberry Fields' time." In 1971, after the split, Lennon seemed intent on denying Martin's impact altogether. He told *Rolling Stone*, "I'd like to hear George Martin's music, please, just play me some."

"I always welcomed experimental sound," Martin said. "What I didn't like was mindless ramblings in the hope that something would strike. When you just sat for hours, through jamming of one sort or another, waiting for something to happen, then it got very, very boring indeed. And I don't think they realized quite how boring they were."

Martin says that he felt "emasculated by what was going on" in the studio at the end of the sixties. "I felt that I didn't have a role to play. I wasn't just going to walk out, having gone that far. But it was a tough time, really tough. They were so much at each other's throats. With John and Paul, I think it was like two cocks fighting, in a way. They were jockeying for position, and John did want to be dominant. It wasn't the fault of George or Ringo at all. It was mainly John. And, of course, Paul, being bossy and trying to get things together, trying to counter John, only put other people's backs up, too. The influence of John and Yoko at that time was not good on the Beatles. I think perhaps it would have been better if the Beatles had split up. But something did come out of it, because they came back and did 'Abbey Road,' which was great."

Martin thinks of "Abbey Road" as a kind of reconciliation. He worked closely again with Lennon, both on "Come Together" ("One of the best tracks ever," Martin says) and on "Because," and he collaborated with McCartney to create the symphonic medley that closes the album. When it was all over, Martin says, he felt a sense of relief. "I felt as though we'd run a race and we were looking at each other, exhausted and thanking heaven that we wouldn't have to run it again. I am enormously proud of what we did and grateful that we parted company as friends. I was afraid that we would part during 'Let It Be,' in which case there would have been a terrible sense of loss. But we went out on 'Abbey Road,' and things were largely mended."

"We used to feel your pain, but that's no longer our policy."

• •

MARTIN is a wealthy man, but a surprisingly small proportion of his wealth comes from his work with the Beatles, and he is not as wealthy as he might have been. Until 1965, Martin was paid only his salary as an EMI house producer under the terms of a contract he had signed with the label in January, 1962, six months before the arrival of the Beatles. Martin always felt that EMI should have been offering him a commission. By 1965, with four Beatles albums behind him, Martin believed that his case was stronger still. He met with EMI's managing director, Len Wood, and said he would resign unless he was given a royalty on sales. Wood offered Martin a large cash bonus. But as they talked he let slip that Martin's productions had earned EMI more than two million pounds in the previous year. "I thought, You bloody idiot. You've just told me what I'm worth," Martin says.

Martin left EMI in early 1965 and started his own freelance company, Associated Independent Recording. AIR then did a deal with EMI in which Martin would receive a two-per-cent royalty on any productions undertaken by AIR for release by EMI. Even then, however, Beatles records were subject to a separate contract, guaranteeing Martin just one-fifth of one per cent on British sales and a relatively tiny share of the American proceeds. "It was a weak deal, a naïve deal," Martin says.

"I earned much more money when the Beatles dissolved than ever before," he says. "I was able to sell myself at the going rate." In the immediate aftermath of the Beatles, Martin produced albums for the group America, for Jeff Beck, and for the Mahavishnu Orchestra. He worked on solo recordings for Ringo Starr and for Paul McCartney. He remained on good terms with George Harrison, and in the late seventies he visited John Lennon in New York, and he and Lennon reëstablished their friendship. As the individual Beatles have undertaken their various personal odysseys through drugs, drink, vegetarianism, and film production, Martin has calmly made himself the master of a small entrepreneurial empire.

AIR prospered so quickly that after only four years it could afford its own commercial studios in central London. McCartney recorded several of his solo albums there; Pink Floyd, the Police, the Pretenders, and INXS, among other groups, made records at AIR. In 1985, the company moved to its current premises, AIR Lyndhurst, in a deconsecrated church in Hampstead, North London. Martin's studios continue to rake in lucrative recording fees from acts such as Cher and Simply Red. The Lyndhurst facility also gets a lot of business from Hollywood: music for "Rob Roy," "Stargate," and "The Lion King" was recorded there.

In 1966, George Martin married Judy Lockhart Smith, a secretary at EMI. When the Martins aren't in London, they live in a small village in Wiltshire. Their house is a former rectory, part of whose structure dates back to the fourteenth century. Framed on a wall in the hall is the top sheet of Martin's score for the string quartet on "Yesterday," at the top of which Paul McCartney has written, "Yesterday, by Paul McCartney, John Lennon, George Martin Esq. and Mozart." In the sitting room, framed photographs of the family are grouped on the piano. Martin has two children, now in their twenties, from his present marriage: Giles, who has recently begun working as a record producer, and Lucie, who works in marketing for a food company.

The Martins maintain a busy social calendar: pop concerts, auctions, film premières, exhibition openings, dinners with Andrew Lloyd Webber. When I was visiting the Wiltshire house one Friday this summer, the record producer Quincy Jones phoned. Jones, an old friend, wanted to meet the Martins for dinner on Sunday, and Martin and his wife discussed their commitments. One possible solution involved moving their Sunday-evening guests forward to Sunday lunchtime, meeting Quincy Jones for an early dinner at Le Manoir, near Oxford, and then driving up to London for a Wembley Arena concert by Wet Wet Wet, a pop group that appeals mainly to teen-agers. I suggested to Martin that he would probably be the only man in his age group attending. "Yes, I suppose so," he said. "But I want to see what they're like."

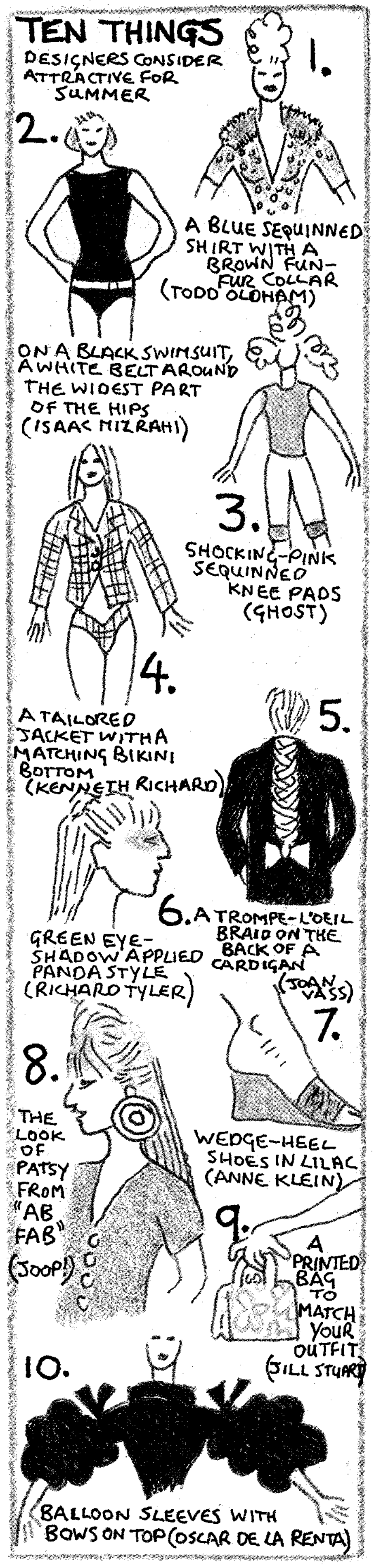
Recently, Martin says, his age has been catching up with him. He has been alarmed and depressed because his hearing has deteriorated—something he first noticed in a recording studio eighteen years ago. "An engineer was putting tones on a tape and adjusting the EQs. And I saw the needles flicker and realized I couldn't hear anything. I said, 'What frequency is that?' He said, 'Twelve kilohertz.' I said, 'Is that at normal level?' He said, 'Yes.' And I thought, Oh, shit." Martin has no doubt that he has brought deafness on himself by his music. "Judy would often turn up at sessions and be shocked by the levels we worked at," Martin says. His poor hearing now complicates his talking to people in crowded rooms.

This spring, Martin was, for the first time in his adult life, forced to spend time in a hospital bed, after undergoing an operation to remove a tumor from his groin. Two further operations were needed in quick succession to complete the removal. Later, as Martin convalesced in Wiltshire, he had visitors to console him, including George Harrison. He wanted to show Martin his new car—a million-dollar McLaren F1, which is so furiously sporty that the driver sits in the middle. He also brought Martin a small carved-wood statue of the Hindu god Ganesh, a cross-legged human figure with the head of an elephant. "He takes care of people, I gather," Martin told me. "I'm not very well up on Indian gods." Martin has put the statue beside his bed.

DURING the past summer, in between scouring the Beatles archive, conducting concerts of orchestral Beatles music in Sweden and Portugal, maintaining his studio business, and launching a new radio station in London, Martin has been working on the album that he says will be his last. Assisted by his son Giles, he is preparing a set of new versions of Beatles songs, some of them orchestral arrangements over which he intends to record recitations of the lyrics by well-known theatre and film actors.

It is hard to predict the commercial fate awaiting this as yet untitled final project. Neither Britain nor America proved to be an especially hot market for "From the Beatles to Bond and Bach," an instrumental album that Martin recorded in 1974. In any case, it is probably fair to assume that the six CDs of "The Beatles Anthology" will sell much better, and will also do a much more definitive job of representing the legacy of the Beatles and reminding us of Martin's contribution to it.

Then again, pop hits can come from unlikely places. Martin should know this as well as anyone in the music business. In 1966, just prior to producing the "Revolver" album, he found time to record the Mastersingers, four teachers from a school near Oxford, who performed the Highway Code in cathedral plainsong. That single reached No. 25 on the British chart. ◆

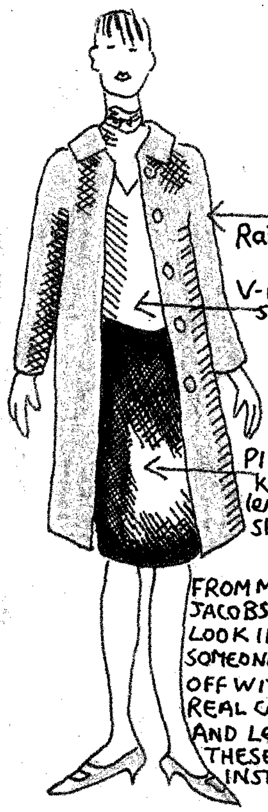

TEN THINGS
DESIGNERS CONSIDER ATTRACTIVE FOR SUMMER
1.
2.
A BLUE SEQUINNED SHIRT WITH A BROWN FUN-FUR COLLAR (TODD OLDHAM)
ON A BLACK SWIMSUIT, A WHITE BELT AROUND THE WIDEST PART OF THE HIPS (ISAAC MIZRAHI)
3.
SHOCKING-PINK SEQUINNED KNEE PADS (GHOST)
4.
A TAILORED JACKET WITH A MATCHING BIKINI BOTTOM (KENNETH RICHARD)
5.
6. A TROMPE-L'OEIL BRAID ON THE BACK OF A CARDIGAN (JOAN VASS)
GREEN EYE-SHADOW APPLIED PANDA STYLE (RICHARD TYLER)
7.
8.
THE LOOK OF PATSY FROM "AB FAB" (JOOP!)
WEDGE-HEEL SHOES IN LILAC (ANNE KLEIN)
9.
A PRINTED BAG TO MATCH YOUR OUTFIT (JILL STUART)
10.
BALLOON SLEEVES WITH BOWS ON TOP (OSCAR DE LA RENTA)

LOOKS BRIEFLY NOTED

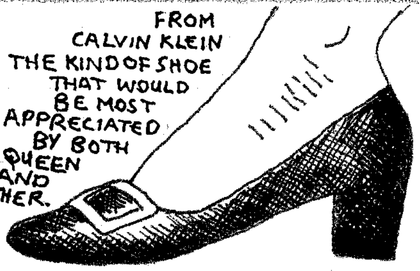
FROM THE SPRING-SUMMER NEW YORK COLLECTIONS

by Michael Roberts

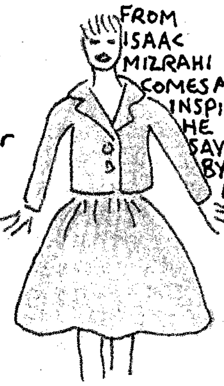
THE FASHION MOMENT



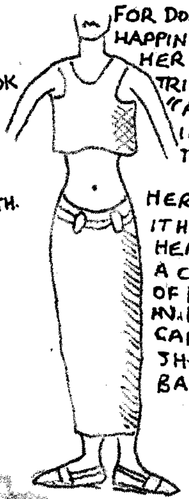
FROM MARC JACOBS A LOOK IMPLYING SOMEONE RAN OFF WITH YOUR REAL CLOTHES AND LEFT THESE INSTEAD.



FROM CALVIN KLEIN THE KIND OF SHOE THAT WOULD BE MOST APPRECIATED BY BOTH THE QUEEN AND HER MOTHER.

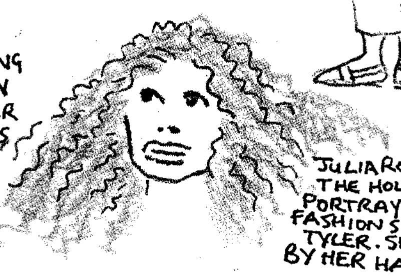


FROM ISAAC MIZRAHI COMES A LOOK INSPIRED, HE SAYS, BY A MOTH.



FOR DONNA KARAN HAPPINESS IS WHEN HER CLOTHES ARE TRIED ON AND "A WOMAN'S IMAGINATION TAKES OVER."

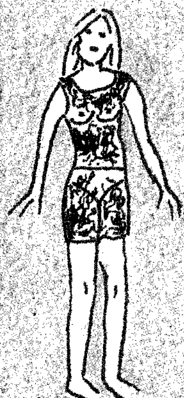
HERE, PERHAPS, IT HAS TAKEN HER OVER TO A CONVENTION OF BELLY DANCERS IN DOWNTOWN CAIRO – BUT SHE SHOULD BE BACK SOON.



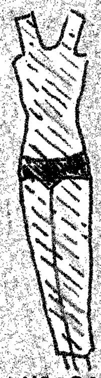
JULIA ROBERTS, THE HOLLYWOOD ACTRESS, IS PORTRAYED WATCHING A FASHION SHOW BY RICHARD TYLER. SHE IS ACCOMPANIED BY HER HAIR.

SHOW AND TELL

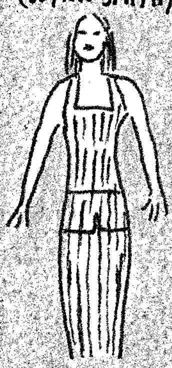
FLAUNTING PANTIES AS A TREND



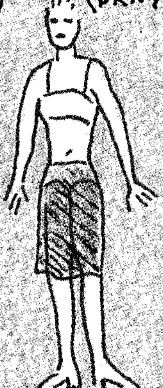
UNDER LACE (WYNN SMITH)



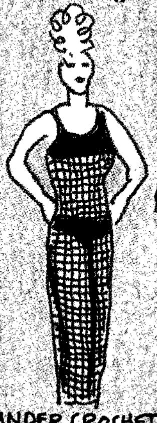
UNDER MESH (DKNY)



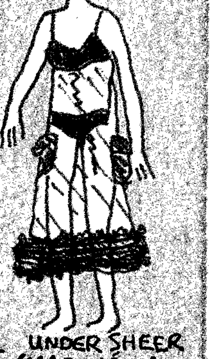
UNDER PLASTIC (MATSUDA)



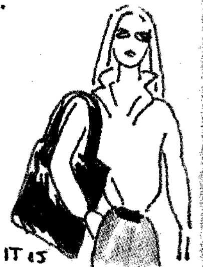
UNDER NYLON (MIU MIU)



UNDER CROCHET (TODD OLDHAM)

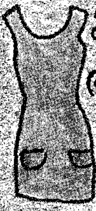


UNDER SHEER (MARITHÉ & FRANÇOIS GIRBAUD)

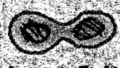


IT IS A TRUTH UNIVERSALLY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT A RALPH LAUREN GIRL IN RED LEATHER JEANS WILL LOOK LESS FINISHING SCHOOL, MORE BEAUTY-SCHOOL DROPOUT.

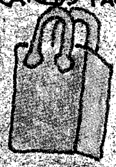
CITRUS CORNER



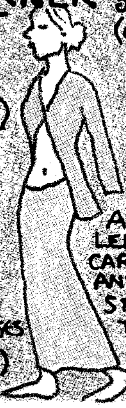
AN ORANGE DRESS (ANNA SUI)



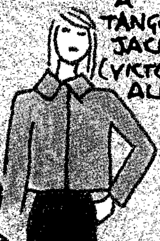
ORANGE SUNGLASSES (CHRISTIAN ROTH)



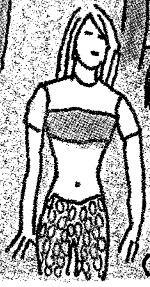
A TWO-TONE ORANGE BAG (CARLOS FALCHI)



A LEMON CARDIGAN AND STRETCH TUBE SKIRT (DKNY)

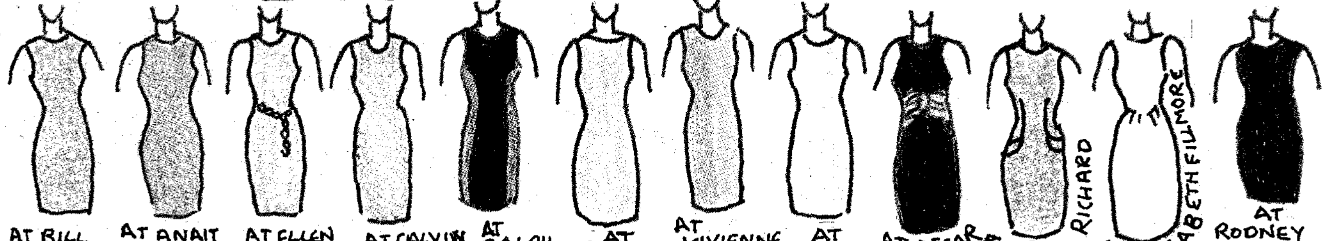


A TANGERINE JACKET (VICTOR ALFARO)



A LIME BANDEAU UNDER A TRANSPARENT WHITE T-SHIRT (VIVIENNE TAM)

THE SHIFT DRESS – A rose is a rose is a basic dress, basically everywhere.



AT BILL BLASS
AT ANAIT BIAN
AT ELLEN TRACY
AT CALVIN KLEIN
AT RALPH LAUREN
AT TODD OLDHAM
AT VIVIENNE TAM
AT BASCO
AT OSCAR DE LA RENTA
AT KENNETH RICHARD
AT ELIZABETH FILLMORE
AT RODNEY TELFORD

FICTION

AROUND DUPONT

BY VASSILY AKSYONOV

ZHENYA KATZNELSON had vanished. In America he went by the name Gene Katzen. He was a freelancer at the editorial offices of a journal, and his colleagues hadn't noticed his absence right away. Generally speaking, the journal was not quite a journal, but more a kind of society—an association, if you will, that monitored democratic and tyrannical systems. There was, of course, a large Russian division, and Zhenya showed up there every day, although he really didn't need to. Perhaps he felt that it was his duty to put in a daily appearance, or perhaps he was motivated by some sort of unconscious shrewdness: turn up every day, get them used to your being there, and then they'll take you on full-time. The situation was fairly typical. Russian freelancers in other Washington establishments similar to this one tended to sway with the wind, to use a worn-out philosophical metaphor, like "thinking reeds."

This metaphor, I should note, was quite appropriate in Zhenya's case. Zhenya had always swayed slightly with some sort of internal storm. If you happened to drop by the offices of *Constitution*—that was the name of the journal—then suddenly, in the midst of all the exaggerated efficiency, a distinct Moscow type would teeter toward you from the wall. A good-looking man with large deer eyes, forty-something. Well, the eyes looked about forty, but he had the physique of a much younger man. He always wore a short jacket and jeans, tennis shoes—you know, that youthful style popular everywhere, Dupont Circle being no exception.

I STILL remembered him from Moscow, or at least I thought I remembered him. I wouldn't rule out the possibility that we found ourselves on numerous occasions around the same table with some boisterous artistic types. At any rate, he constantly reminisced about different people from Moscow, quite often celebrities. Had I heard how Oleg was doing, or Galka, or a certain Justinas? We would go out for a smoke—there was already a fierce campaign at the journal for the eradication of nicotine in the workplace—and, standing on the stairwell, we would swap five-year-old Moscow gossip. Zhenya's eyes would then begin to shine with a certain boldness, and his shakiness would subside. It was obvious that those old Moscow days had not been the worst in his life.

Once, he gave me his curriculum vitae, asking me to put in some good words for him around town. The vita reflected the not untypical fate of an artistic Russian boy: graduated from an architectural institute, published a book of poems, played in a jazz-rock band called Weapons Warehouse, lectured on ancient architecture at the Knowledge Society, appeared in a film, put on a play, and . . . emigrated.

Now, many of us émigrés tend to overly dramatize or even heroicize our deed. Such rebellious angels of socialism! "We voted against Soviet power with our feet!" However, once you voted with your feet, you had to give the old bitch a kick up the ass at least once, didn't you? You left, so you left; why go on and on about who voted with what against the old lady, and behave smugly to those left behind to boot?

Zhenya Katznelson was not one of those types whose "deed" filled them with self-importance. He obviously yearned for his previous existence—the songs of Okudzhava, Galich, Vysotsky, Veronika Dolina, and everything connected with that stirring Moscow life, things beyond the comprehension of the journal *Constitution*. He had been a resident in America since the mid-seventies—in other words, for more than ten years before he vanished. To put it mildly, he hadn't really made it as an artist. At *Constitution* he worked primarily at sorting out the Soviet press, producing a digest for the directors, and doing some translations. Somehow, money trickled in fairly steadily, which eventually allowed him to take out a loan from the bank to buy an apartment. I remember that he was extremely excited, and proud of this state of affairs. Imagine, I'll get my own house! You know, I'll get a dog! We'll live together, my setter and I. What a poor thing, I thought then, rather strangely. What a poor thing he really is, I thought for some unknown reason in some nineteenth-century Lermontovian manner.

It seems I never came across Zhenya outside the *Constitution* offices, and definitely never at "Russiantonian" or at purely "Washingtonian" parties, or at mixed gatherings. Someone somewhere said that Katznelson was extremely shy. Someone else guffawed like a soldier: "Friends, I don't like those quiet ones!" No, I beg your pardon, that's not right. Once, my wife invited him to a noisy party. He stood there with a drink in his hand, so pale, not himself, that in Russia they'd say he was "out of his plate," if that could be said about a party where there wasn't one real plate, only paper ones: he was an émigré version of the "superfluous man." It seems we then exchanged a few sentences about the schism in the Moscow Art Theatre, or maybe it wasn't then at our place but at the place where he and I usually met, on the smoking stairwell at *Constitution*.

ANYWAY, he disappeared. The Bulgarian philosopher Valerian Avelianov informed me of this by telephone. It seemed that Zhenya hadn't turned up at the journal for two weeks. At least two weeks, if not three. Perhaps even a month. Finally, they decided to call me, since they considered me to be on friendly terms with Katznelson. It was a curious thing: if our relationship was considered a friendship, I wonder what they considered to be mere fellowship in that international agency for the study of tyranny.

My wife started to call all our friends and acquaintances. Nobody even knew where Zhenya lived, where that exciting condominium he had bought was situ-

FILIP PAGOWSKI

ated. Someone remembered seeing him once at Dupont Circle, quite a while before his disappearance, with a young Irish setter, called Mikhail, on a leash. Or maybe the dog's name was Kuzma? One woman presumed that a particular group of New Yorkers would certainly know where Katznelson had gone, because he definitely hung out with that crowd. This was news to me. He had never mentioned anything about the company he kept in New York. Nobody in Washington knew any names, and everyone made helpless gestures—they certainly couldn't call the entire Manhattan émigré community.

As a result of the alarm raised by the babbling Russians, *Constitution* made an official police inquiry. The police didn't have anything on Gene Katzen. Then someone surmised that he could have returned to Moscow; the climate was different there now, the Communists were behaving more decently. At the journal, someone remembered that he had recently got into some trouble because of Moscow. People from this organization couldn't go to Moscow without permission from the higher-ups, and one time a colleague, Agrippina Priestova, who was in Moscow with official permission, saw the permissionless Katznelson on Gorky Street. On her return, she thought it her duty to inform on him, and if this hadn't happened in America, you would have called her a "snitch." Katznelson was subsequently summoned to the personnel office. Recalling this incident, Valerian Avelianov called it a flagrant violation of Zhenya's civil rights, and said he wouldn't be a bit surprised if he found out Zhenya had taken off for Moscow after such a humiliation. On the other hand, someone, perhaps that same insidious Agrippina Priestova, allowed that Katznelson could have easily infiltrated the organization as a Soviet mole.

After these conversations, it became clear to everyone that interest in the affair had subsided, and that soon the whole community would forget about the missing Katznelson. It was just then that my wife unexpectedly discovered the address of the Katznelson condominium and went out in search of it, taking a friend along for protection.

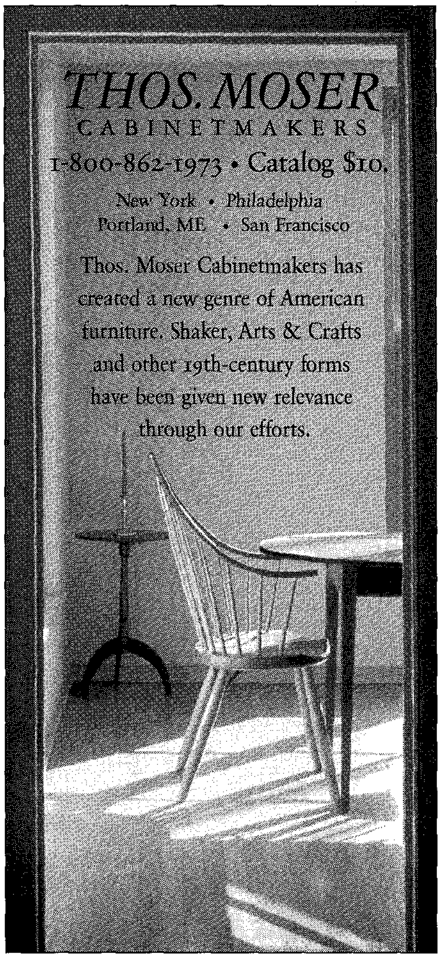
She returned empty-handed, full of indignation about American procedures: this condo in Adams Morgan was like a fortress; it was impossible to get inside; nobody would ever open the door if the person you were visiting was not in. And as for the superintendent, he just shrugged his shoulders: he didn't have sufficient grounds on which to infringe on the privacy of a resident, since all the bills for the current month had been paid. Only if the payments were to stop might the homeowners' association, after conferring with the bank, consider putting before the appropriate authorities the question of a forced entry into the unit owned by Mr. Katzen. In the meantime, ladies, he had said, I can only advise you to go to the police.

So I went myself, and in a quarter of an hour arrived at the foot of an imposing structure five or six blocks away from the lively scene at Dupont Circle. The building was called the Victoria, a fact announced in big letters over the awning of the main entrance. The peak of the awning looked like the spread fin of a flying fish and was out of place against the somber façade and the narrow windows made of mirrored glass. This masterpiece of commercial architecture from the yuppie era was reminiscent of a model medium-security prison. All the necessary conveniences were implied, and in the inner courtyard—in other words, in the guarded space—there was supposed to be a solarium and a pool, all very carefully planned and comfortable, hinting at some as yet unnamed American socialism.

I ALREADY knew the number of the Katznelson unit, B-108A, and to clear my conscience I tried calling Gene from the entrance. I got his machine, where he very politely and without any trace of an accent apologized for his absence and invited me to leave a message. And then a black gentleman came out of his building holding the door open inquisitively: Well, are you coming in? It seemed that my appearance, and even more so the make of my car, which was parked at the entrance, didn't raise any doubts in him about my gaining access to this residential citadel. I asked him if he knew Gene Katzen from number B-108A. He didn't. Why don't you just knock on his door, he suggested. Maybe his phone isn't working, or some other nonsense. I entered.

It was around three in the afternoon, and it seemed the people who lived here all worked, since I didn't see a soul as I wandered through the lobby and some short hallways on the first floor. In such buildings, one must always be on guard so as not to fall into a claustrophobic trap. From one side of a door a doorknob might turn, while from the other side it might not, and you could find yourself in a dimly lit hallway for eternity. Nobody would ever respond to your cries for help. Perhaps Gene Katzen has been stuck in here somewhere, trembling, for three weeks now, I thought. Rushing about, I ran down a steel staircase, grabbing the doorknobs at every floor, all of them immobile. "Hey, is there anyone around here?" I yelled in a deliberately robust voice, while my insides were churning: You're in a scrape now. Suddenly, an illuminated "Exit" sign appeared, and it proved true to its word. Turning the doorknob and pressing against the door with my knee, I fell out into the inner courtyard of the Victoria. Just then, a formation of geese crossed the square of sky above, heading out to their favorite place in the Potomac Palisades, on the bank of the spacious, vibrant river canyon.

One side of the square was defined by the façade of a tall apartment building, while the three other sides were made up of rows of stacked units, each with its own entrance. Zhenya's place was in one of these rows—there. I began banging on the door. I felt as if I were knocking on a block of granite. No response. A Latino woman walked by, pushing a white baby in a stroller. In answer to my question, she threw up her hands: Don't understand, haven't got a clue. The baby showed me his rattle. He obviously wasn't privy to the secrets of this massive abode. One after another, several more of Katznelson's neighbors passed by. I dutifully asked each of them about the missing Katzen, so that in that distant place where these matters are taken into account, it would sink in that this one man was sincerely trying to find the other one. None of those interrogated knew the inhabitant of this town house, or had ever even seen him. Everyone shrugged their shoulders as if to say, "Why on earth should we know anyone who lives here?" And then the courtyard was empty, and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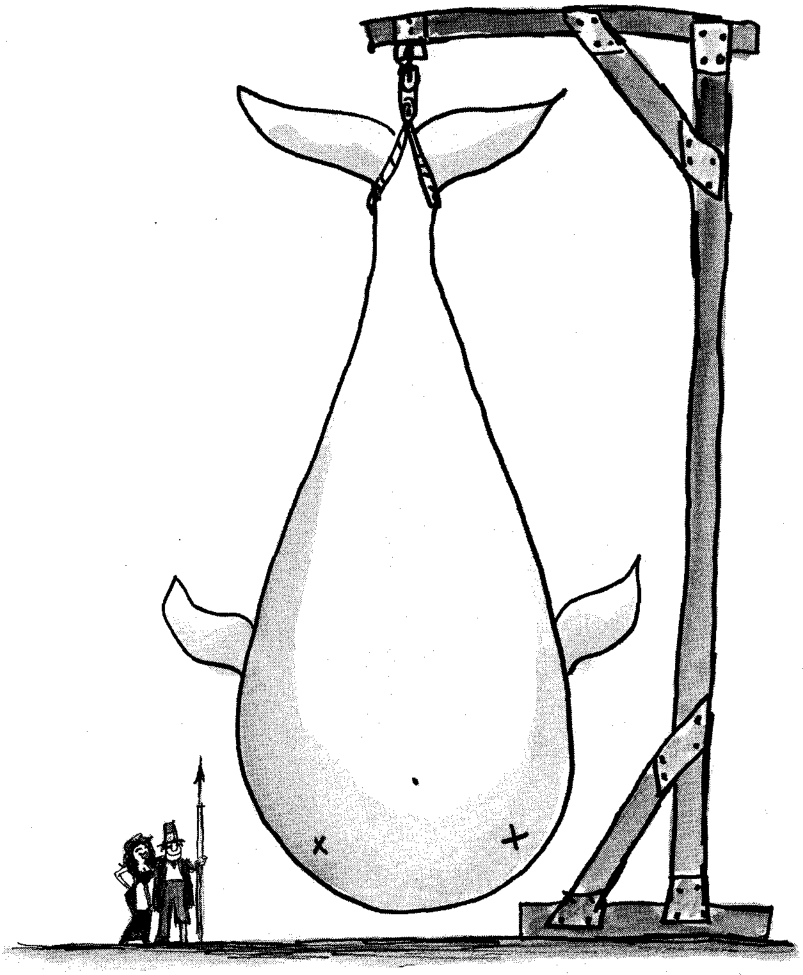
the whole of the Victoria again became an alien monolith.

Good, so I'd done everything I could. At any rate, I had done more than all the other co-workers of the missing man put together. I had barely escaped from that claustrophobic snare! Couldn't really break down the door, now, could I? Let the proper authorities break it down, I thought. I can set out for home with a clear conscience, and think about the alienation of man in the modern world, about all this odious existentialism. I started back with all kinds of justifications for my decision. The car, with the calm befitting its model, continued to wait, its emergency lights flashing. When I was already almost out of there, it crossed my mind that this town house might have another exit out onto a parallel street.

The parallel street turned out to be one of those it is inadvisable to visit. In America it often happens that one street is considered "decent" and the next inadvisable to walk on. I drove over there and saw a group wearing baseball caps turned backward and bright pants. Well, it was obvious they were selling ecstasy powder. A metal fence stood in front of a dilapidated shack with a warped, rusty "Fish" sign. This was how the slummy side of the street looked, while the "decent" side presented a row of town houses from the Victoria condominium, with separate entrances. Slowly I rode alongside this row, checking the numbers: B-104A, B-105A, B-106A, B-107A. . . . The door to B-108A was ajar! Leaping out of the car, I was just about to fling myself into the apartment, but then the tendons in my legs prudently tugged me back. Katznelson had been missing for weeks, but the door to his apartment was open. No, I couldn't cross over the threshold! First of all, I shouldn't go in without the police, and, second of all, I



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should take pity on my nerves; who knows what I'd find in there.

WHILE all this was passing through my mind, a young man came out of the neighboring door, marked B-109A.

"Excuse me, have you seen Gene Katzen?" I asked. The young man wrinkled his balding forehead, swaying on his sprightly, athletic legs: he was getting ready to go out for a run.

"Who is this Gene Katzen?"

"It's your neighbor, your next-door neighbor, after all, from over there!" I said, my voice rising unnaturally.

The young man winced slightly, glanced at his black watch with a yellow dial, and, at a loss for words, mumbled, "Thanks for telling me. I didn't know his name. What happened?" I explained that his neighbor had disappeared, but his door was ajar. Had the jogger (in his youthful absent-mindedness) noticed anything unusual? Sorry for all the trouble. He grabbed his left ankle with his left hand, and while pressing the ankle to his buttock reached his right hand behind his neck, making such a resounding crack that it frightened us both.

"Excuse me for doing this, it just happens automatically," he said. "By the way, I've noticed this door on the left has been open for quite a while. How long? Well, at least two weeks, if not three." With those words, he briskly ran off past the ecstasy venders, turning the corner into the "decent" streets. I was left alone by the door that gaped into the darkness like the entrance to a pyramid.

It didn't occur to me to call 911 and *Constitution* right away, but when I finally did I mumbled indecisively, because I didn't quite understand my role in this whole affair. In about fifteen minutes, they all arrived at the same time: the cops, and my colleagues from tyranny-monitoring—V. Avelianov, Klarissa Sonovna, Montassar Bdar, and of course the ever-present Agrippina. This last was making more of a fuss than anyone else, forcing herself on the cops, going on and on about Zhenya's "instability."

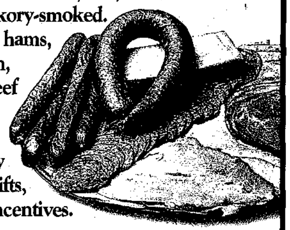
The police listened to everyone courteously, but with a decided lack of interest. Then they entered the apartment sideways, holding their guns over their heads. Barely ten minutes went by before they returned, calmly opening the door wide. There hadn't been a trace of any wrongdoing. They hadn't found anything, except a light layer of dust. Here's our phone number, ladies and gentlemen, let's keep in touch. In a few days we'll most certainly be able to answer your questions. In the United States, eighty-seven per cent of those missing are found sooner or later.

I FORGOT to mention that all this was taking place in autumn. The parks were turning crimson-purple and lemon-yellow, the leaves brightening into a graphic display; a cognac shade was thickening in the oak twilight. Not only the bronchial wisps but also the alveoli of the majestic mid-Atlantic flora began to shine through. With characteristic flightiness, the passersby had already managed to forget the gruelling steam bath of summer and were now enthusiastically starting up new projects: some busied themselves with love affairs, some with real-estate transactions. All took great pleasure in the cool, quickly darkening evening skies and from their still light coats worn with already warm scarves. In a word, bliss had arrived, which in some years could last many weeks and would not even be affected by political or sexual scandals on the Hill.

It was on one of these evenings that I dropped by a bookstore-café, to drink some cappuccino and leaf through some literary publications. As I stood in line at the coffee machine, someone called out to me in the Russian manner—that is, by my first name and patronymic. Behind me stood a large man with half-gray Rastafarian ringlets and a fleshy nose, which would have dominated his whole morose, stagnant face if it weren't for a silver earring in his left ear that at this moment happened to glimmer against the dying embers under the green sunset. It was as if the earring were chiming, Don't chase me away!

"I was walking behind you, but couldn't decide whether to call out to you. Figured you wouldn't recognize me. Well, do you?"

Of course I recognized him. A Muscovite with a strange last name. An art historian and a historian of art. Yes, precisely, Alexander Congusto. Alik. It had been twenty years since we had last seen each other. I held out my hand to him. He didn't shake it, but smiled amicably and joined me as I sat down at a table. "I'm so glad to see you, I don't remember whether we addressed each other formally or as friends. You're not going to



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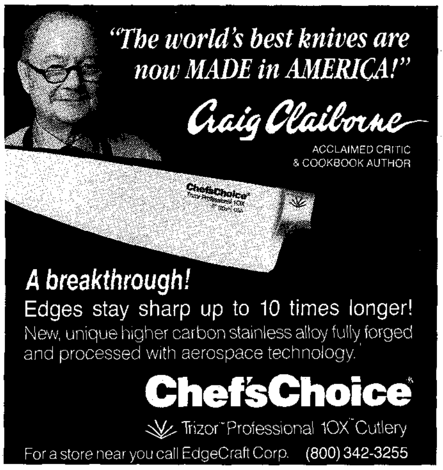

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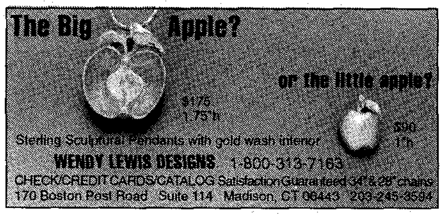

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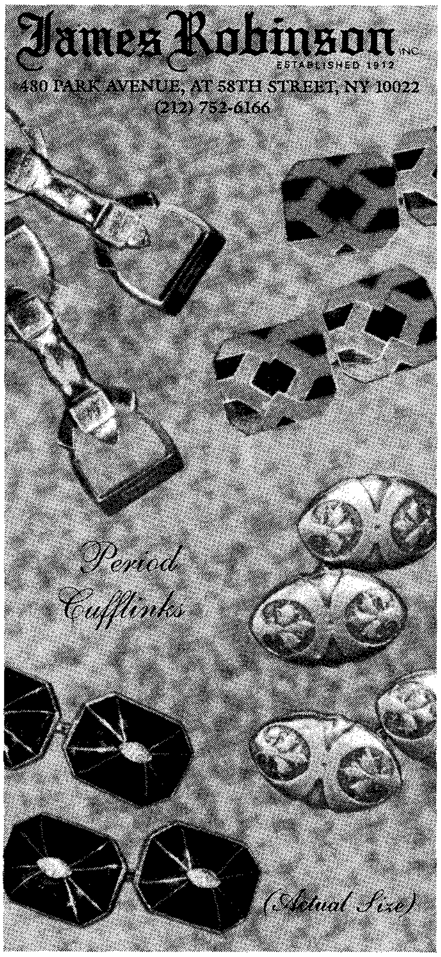
believe this—I was planning to call you, but I couldn't make up my mind whether I should. And then here you appear, getting coffee right in front of me. I heard you're searching for Zhenya Katznelson, and I've just come down from New York to visit him. Well, yes, I just saw him an hour ago. The news is not good. He's dying. He's in Sibley Memorial Hospital, in the intensive-care unit. Well, yes, you do understand, you do know the story of our circle of friends. You don't? Well, he's got an advanced case of AIDS, which cannot be helped. As they say in Russian, SPID, in high speed."

So it was such a simple story
We got a bottle of wine
The window like a faraway sea
Was turning lavender this time.
"You'll have to pay for all you've had
in life,
For what made you drunk on the earth,"
Sang the Afro-Asian
In a Dupont Circle café.

"We were all from the Moscow 'blue division,' and in the mid-seventies we all decided to emigrate," Congusto explained. "We couldn't stand being degraded by those disgusting 'law-enforcement agencies.' The criminal code gave the pigs the right to throw any one of us behind bars. And you do know what awaits a queer in the camps? Gang rape by filthy bastards who don't give a damn what they screw: a goat, a human being, or a telephone pole.

"All of our secret gatherings—Kuzmin poetry readings, Somov exhibits and Somov-like exhibits of etchings, with some kind of contraband cassette playing—everyone quivering at any sound from the door . . . Throughout all this, we knew very well there was a burgeoning movement in the United States celebrating our culture. Of course, if the chance of clearing out hadn't come, we would have stayed and tolerated the situation, but the opportunity suddenly arose, and seven of us—the closest of the friends and lovers in the group—made up our minds to submit applications for Israeli visas. Everyone, of course, had discovered their Jewish relations, even the Russian aristocrats—you know who I mean. You don't? Well, Yurka Ludenishchev-Kurguzov, Vitasik Treshchokin-Sarantsev, and, well, Borka Gretsky-Sterzhen . . . Didn't you know they were gay? I thought everyone knew all about us.

"We all got together in New York at



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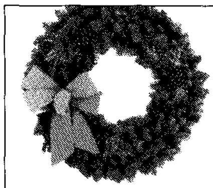

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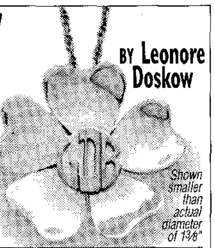

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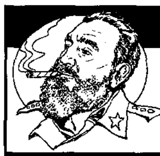

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the height of the gay carnival, in 1978. We had been told that freedom awaited us, but still we never expected it to be so carnivalesque. It was as if we were in a state of endless ecstasy. I would wake up every morning with ecstasy and go to sleep with it as well, if I slept at all back then. In fact, I copulated with ecstasy from morning to night and back again. Whatever guises it would don, it was still just ecstasy, and it and I fucked. Understand, old man? Well, it's just as well you don't.

"We were given a hero's welcome and dragged from city to city, from coast to coast—L.A. and San Francisco, Chicago, New Orleans, Cape Cod and Southampton in the summers, Key West in the winters—and we were surrounded by people just like us! Like us!

"A year passed this way, and another year, and then somehow, without even noticing, we ourselves began to shy away from the jubilant gay masses. Suddenly, something began to repel us in this boundless blue sea. The movement had turned out to be overly popular. In Moscow and Peter, homosexuality was taken as a sign of refinement—we considered ourselves the élite—and here we suddenly were among vulgar salesmen, roaring with laughter and yelling across the whole bar about who fucked whom and how hard up the ass. These festivals began to seem obscene to us, with all the frolicking backsides, and cat tails hanging from perineums. Someone from our group, maybe even Zhenya, once said, Hey, boys, don't you think that out of this ten per cent (at that time it was believed that ten per cent of the population were overtly or latently gay) the vast majority are not really gay but just doing it because it's the 'in' thing to do among the yokels?

"Here is a paradox of paradoxes: We suddenly remembered our secret gatherings in the Union with an almost hysterical nostalgia. Again, as in the old days, we read Kuzmin's poetry, as if officiating at a holy sacrament:

Your tender glance
Luring and clever
What a pleasant dance
Resounding with laughter
Or Marivo's pen so impulsive
Your nose Pierrot
The curve of your lips so entrancing
They spin my mind, like the Marriage of
    Figaro!

You see, we considered ourselves the revivalists of the Silver Age, the time of those famous Russian gays—Kuzmin, Somov, Diaghilev. . . . And no matter how inebriated we got after ingesting alcoholic Soviet sludge, we paid allegiance to the 'tenderness of the world,' to 'erotic kindness,' and 'the last infatuation.' We dreamt of flight, repeating the words of our idol: 'Dying every minute, will I see the new Arion?' And so we saw what really was the newest Arion, with frolicking mobs carrying political slogans on the shores.

"We began to avoid the various mass bacchanalia, but it was already too late to get ourselves out of that which in America is referred to by the nasty word 'promiscuity.' Well, and then that filthy s.o.b. from Quebec, you know, that French-Canadian airline steward, flew into San Francisco with a new plague in his backside. While his plane was on the ground, that is, during the course of twelve hours, he managed to copulate with fourteen boys. You've probably read about all this? Incredible, you really haven't read or heard anything? And we believed the whole world was shaken by the collapse of our 'alternative' life style.

"Well, you know, just a few years after the first reported AIDS case in America, our Moscow social circle started to die off as well. First we tried to break off into pairs—Zhenya and Vitasik had it easier than the others, since they really had been in love for a long time—but the virus must have been carousing around our group for quite a while. First Mark Tumantsev left us, then Boris, then Yuri. A year ago Zhenya lost Vitasik, and now it's his turn. In a few days I'll be left completely alone. . . ."

We were already outside in the street when he told me the end of this story, walking along Connecticut Avenue, where the American Express agency, with its luminous red-and-blue-striped wall, made promises unto all the ages. Alik Congusto had left his car out there somewhere. He really did embody an alternative life style, with his Peruvian poncho wrapped around him, a pipe in his teeth, and the little sausages of his ponytail carelessly tied—as opposed to Katznelson, who had always appeared ordinary. Ordinary, that is, if you didn't look too closely. And, by the way, nobody had looked very closely.

For some reason, the end of this calm and almost rehearsed story shocked me less than the beginning. It seemed Con-

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gusto had noticed this and was looking at me in a rather perplexed way.

"Then, how was it that Zhenya went missing but his door was left open?" I asked.

Congusto started back at the beginning. "He moved here because of Vitasik," he said. "Vitasik got a job with the Post Office, and Zhenya managed to latch on to *Constitution.* Well, after Vitasik was gone, Zhenya was left here by himself and began to die alone. On the day he began to feel really awful, he couldn't find anything better to do about it than to call me in New York. And so I called the Washington emergency number. That's about it."

"That's about it, that's about it," he repeated several times while walking, and it again appeared to me that there was a certain rehearsed quality to all this, I dare say a kind of theatricality, although what sort of theatre could there be when, as Pasternak put it, "the soil was breathing your destiny"?

Then Congusto began again: "About the door, I just don't know why it was left open. Maybe the paramedics forgot to shut it."

He gave me a phone number where I could reach Katznelson. As was the custom in American hospitals, a dying person was allowed a telephone by his bedside. The dying, the administration might say, need a phone more than those on the mend: they need to sort out their finances and to impart a lot of instructions.

Congusto and I began our farewells. He bowed, as if emphasizing that we still hadn't switched over to less formal terms. I held out my hand to him. He declined my handshake with a faint smile. I suddenly remembered that Zhenya had also (long before he went missing) strangely shied away from these rituals of the palm. Apparently this realization was somehow foolishly exposed on my face. Congusto grinned. "Yes, yes, me, too, although it's not in the advanced stages. Well, I'm H.I.V.-positive, I've got the virus—understand?"

"Yes, of course I understand!" I exclaimed. "However, Alik, it's of no importance, since it's not. . . ." and here I stopped short, barely suppressing my lack of tact. My hand still hung in the space between my raincoat and his poncho.

"Yes, yes, you can't transmit it through a handshake," he said, and, twisting his

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body politely, he seemed about to walk away, but after one step he relented. "I want to tell you one thing. Perhaps it will sound like a cliché . . . but I want to tell you anyway."

I could see that he was becoming very emotional, and I cursed myself for talking with him improperly somehow; my artificial intonation had not allowed him to complete his story in his own, albeit somewhat affected, way, but had forced him into omissions and shortness of breath.

"I just wanted to say that, with all this tragedy, well, we deserve anything you like, but not pity. We perhaps experienced more happiness than others. . . . Well, you've probably heard this a hundred times."

I nodded silently, although I had heard nothing of the kind. Finally, slapping each other on the shoulder, we parted.

Any awkward conversation reverberates afterward for a whole week, not because of its content but precisely because of its awkwardness. After I had taken leave of Congusto, I found I kept flinching, and for some reason I didn't think at all about the tragic end of this group of friends who had escaped from prison, found freedom, and then ended up dead at the hands of this very same freedom. My feeling of awkwardness was increased by another gaffe I committed. Back at home I dialled Katznelson's number at the hospital. Katznelson answered immediately.

"*Da*," he said. His voice was weak, and it was accompanied by a loud wheeze. I didn't know what to say or how to say it. I chose the stupidest, affected cheerfulness.

"So where did you vanish to, Zhenya?"

After a pause he barely audibly pronounced, "Yes, I've vanished, vanished. . . ." Wheezes, another pause, and, after that, a bit louder: "Excuse me, they've hooked me up to a respirator here."

My wife took the phone and asked, "What would you like, Zhenya?" Hearing him out, she continued her side of the conversation: "With flour? Buckwheat? Potatoes? That's fine, I'll bring them to you tomorrow." Hanging up the phone, she explained, "He wants some blintzes."

Aleksandr Blok, the symbolist poet, dreamed of wine on his deathbed, Zhenya Katznelson of blintzes. He even managed to taste a few before dropping off among the respirator tubes.

A week after the ceremony, conducted in the standard—that is to say, very clean and decent—funeral home, I again happened to be around Dupont Circle, where I saw a solitary Irish setter. It was dusk, and so it should have been quiet and mournful, but it was quite the contrary—everything was blasting at full volume. Music and news reports were flying out of cars, bikers and rollerbladers were yelling to one another, and near the fountain a black Dixieland band was playing with bravura. It seemed the only melancholy thing was the setter. Large, honey-ginger in color, he sat under a street lamp, his eyes following the pedestrians and pigeons flitting from bench to bench.

It occurred to me that while looking for Katznelson, everyone had forgotten about his setter, Mikhail. Perhaps it was he who had left the door ajar, when he ran out to catch up with his master, who was being carried off for good.

"Mikhail!" The dog came closer and sat before me, looking me right in the face. I didn't have anything edible with me except two bananas. I peeled them, and he calmly ate them. I wanted to look at the name on his collar, but he turned away from me decisively.

"I knew your master, Mikhail," I said.

He looked at me. "Unfortunately, I'm deprived of the gift of human speech, so I can't answer you," his eyes seemed to say. "Otherwise I would let you know that you are mistaking me for somebody else."

"Maybe you'll come with me?" I stood up, imagining how shocked my own dog would be when I came home with Mikhail.

He didn't move from where he sat, although his stare followed me for a long time. Well, then, no harm would come to such a nice-looking dog in a city where there were so many Irish and animal-rights organizations. If only he wouldn't get hit by a car. Yes indeed, I thought, if only he wouldn't come here every night during rush hour, to wait for his lost master to appear on Dupont Circle, just after the last notes fade from the clarinet. ♦

(*Translated, from the Russian, by Alla Zbinovsky.*)

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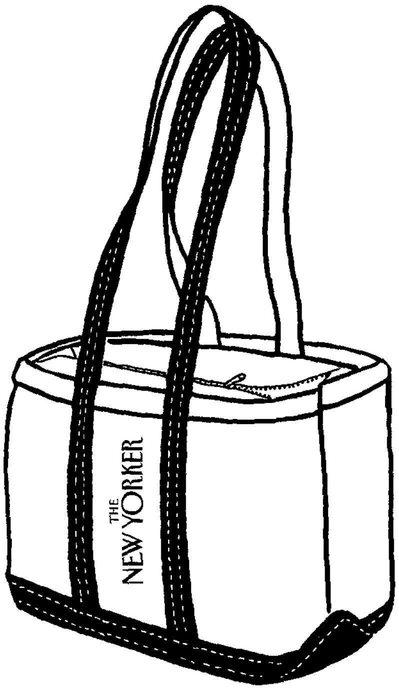

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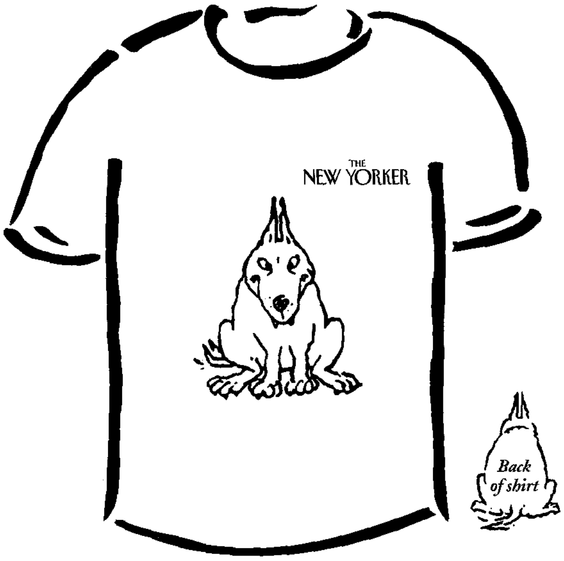

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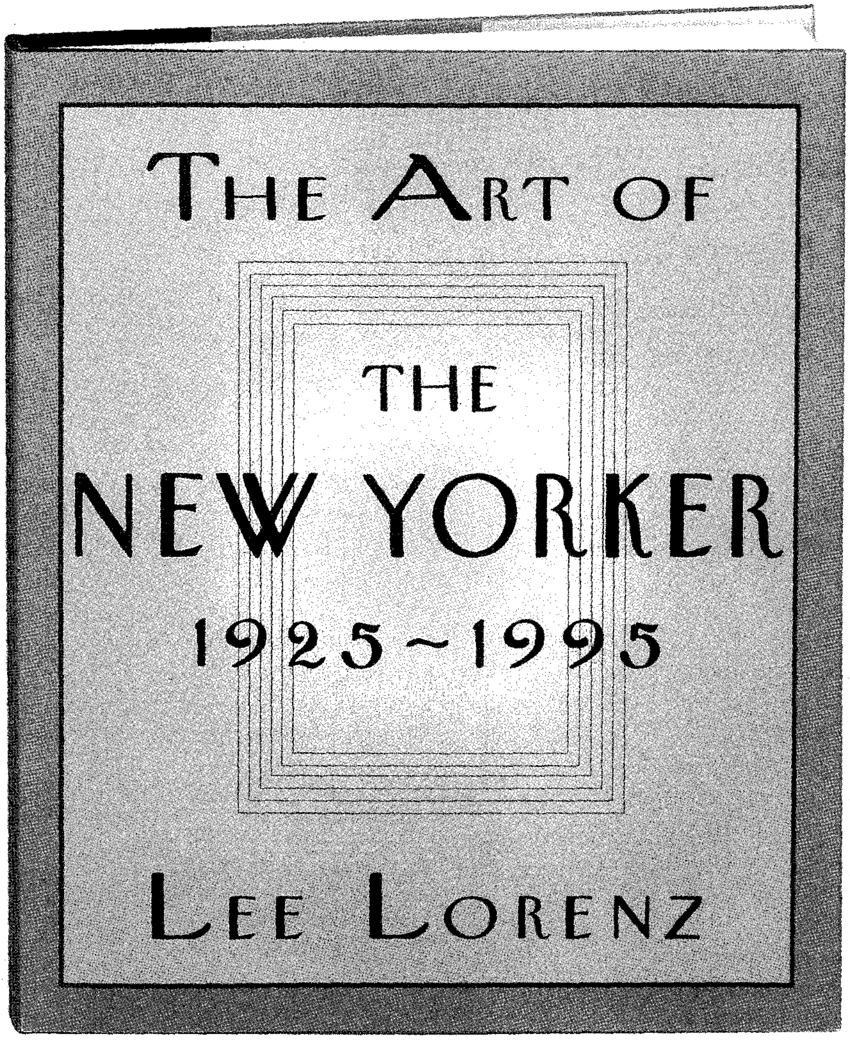

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THE MAKING OF A PATRIARCH

Has Shimon Peres's career prepared him for his most difficult role?

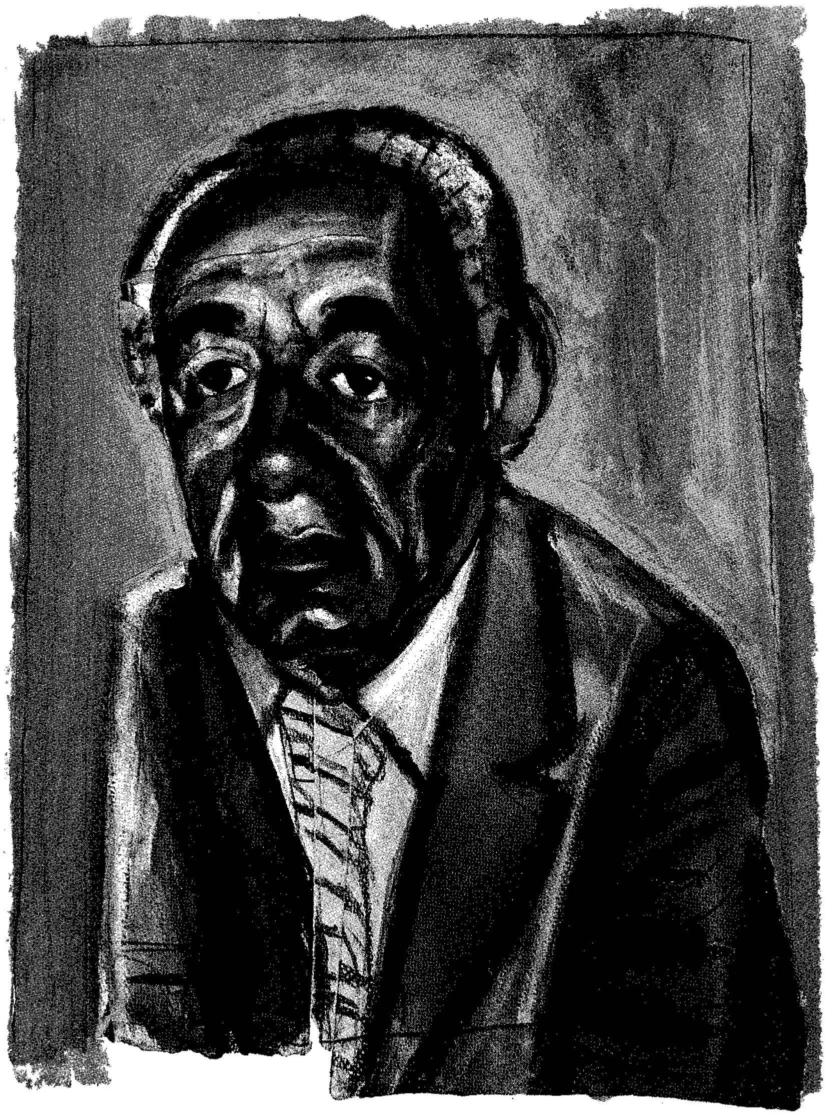
BY SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL

All of Israel's founders and all of their sons—David Ben-Gurion and Levi Eshkol, Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan, Menachem Begin, and now Yitzhak Rabin—are gone. All except one: Shimon Peres. He was a son who has become the patriarch. But he is not an old man who uses the authority of the past to summon the tribe to follow the chiselled commandments. The last survivor of the golden age happens to be a modernizer. Peres rose to prominence as the creator of Israel's military-industrial complex, becoming the father of its Air Force and its nuclear capability—although, remarkably for an Israeli politican, he never held any military rank. He is a polished Francophile with a literary bent whose rapid ascent as an eager protégé of Ben-Gurion earned him a reputation as a mandarin schemer: the poet as party hack. Peres, who wears elegant suits in a country that tends to spurn displays of stylistic vanity, attempts a romantic self-portrait in "Battling for Peace: A Memoir" (Random House; $25). He writes, "Now, in my seventies, as I look back over my life, a phrase comes to mind that was coined by Gabriel García Márquez in one of his stories: 'an unpaid dreamer.' " But Peres is also a genuine visionary—a quality that too often has been dismissed as part of his self-conceit.

The role of visionary was not one for Yitzhak Rabin, who was Peres's opposite in temperament and fought him for control of the Labor Party for decades. Rabin had an almost topographical sense of politics: he dealt with terrain that was mapped. One does not rise to the rank of general by responding to that which does not yet exist. So when Peres came to him in the spring of 1993 with a plan for secretly negotiating peace with the Palestinians, Rabin gave his approval based on a hard logic: either his rival would succeed, in which case Rabin would claim credit, or he would fail, in which case only Peres would receive the blame. Rabin suspected that Peres would fail.

Instead, on November 4th, less than three years after the initiation of the negotiations that produced the Oslo agreement, Rabin and Peres stood onstage in Tel Aviv at a peace rally singing from the same text. At precisely that moment, they were within range of the assassin, Yigal Amir, who has said that he wanted to kill both men. To him, the once-bitter foes had become indistinguishable; to each other, they had become indispensable. "Goodbye, my eldest brother," Peres said in his eulogy at Rabin's funeral. Peres's succession as acting Prime Minister was a Biblical transfer of power.

Shimon Peres's autobiography begins with the classic tale of a shtetl boy. Shimon Persky was born in Wisniew, in what was then a part of Poland, in 1923, the favored son of a lumber broker and the grandson of men who studied at the famous Volozhinen Yeshiva. Shimon joined Hashomer Hatzair, a socialist Zionist youth group, and emigrated with his family to Palestine in 1934, after his father was nearly forced out of business by anti-Semitic measures.



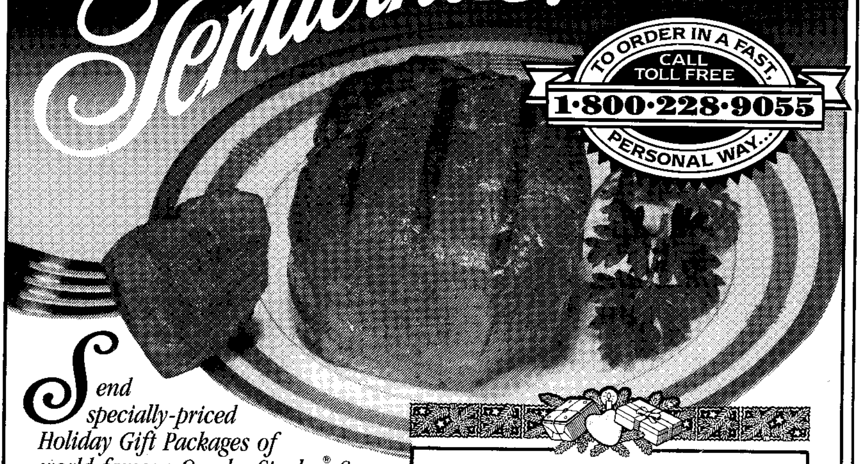
Peres: The issue is no longer survival but progress. Therein lies the new threat.

In Israel, he writes, "Everyone was suntanned, and suntanned people, I assumed, were happy people." He took a new name—Peres, the Hebrew word for the family of birds to which eagles belong. And as a teen-age kibbutznik, he trained for his career by delving into the ideological struggles of socialist Zionist groups.

In 1946, Peres supported the more militant Ben-Gurion against the more moderate Chaim Weizmann at a Zionist conference in Basel, Switzerland. A friend of Ben-Gurion's took Peres to the Drei Könige hotel, and into "the same room Herzl had stayed in during the first Zionist Congress," to meet Ben-Gurion. Peres became a member of Ben-Gurion's entourage and was known as one of his "boys." After the war of independence, Ben-Gurion promoted Peres as one of Israel's first model technocrats and, in 1952, made him director-general of the Defense Ministry—the highest civil-service position in the most strategic department. In that position, he became a skilled arms procurer, arranging Israel's large-scale military purchases from France.

From that point on, Peres operated at the center of factional turmoil and fierce antagonisms. In 1965, Ben-Gurion seceded from the main labor faction, and formed Rafi, a splinter political party. Peres followed, and became Rafi's secretary-general. Two years later, Ben-Gurion asked Peres to use Rafi to destabilize the coalition government of Levi Eshkol, who had been Ben-Gurion's handpicked successor and another Peres mentor. But this time Peres failed Ben-Gurion, who exploded at him: "I thought you were a friend, and I thought you were a statesman. But you are neither the one nor the other." Peres writes, "This was one of the worst moments of my life. I had tried everything I knew to fulfill Ben-Gurion's wishes. I had worked tirelessly, making new enemies, losing old friends, creating a weird coalition of disparate parties, rejecting the various temptations and blandishments that had been offered to me—and this was my reward: to hear from the man whom I so much admired that I was no longer his friend." Upon Eshkol's death, Peres begged Ben-Gurion to attend his old comrade's funeral. "I'm not going to his funeral," Ben-Gurion replied, "and he shouldn't come to my funeral either."

In 1974, Peres battled to succeed



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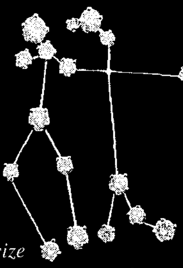

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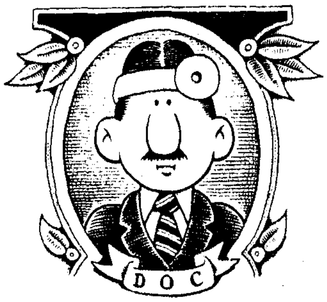
Golda Meir as Prime Minister, but his foes edged him out and elevated General Rabin, a political neophyte who had the air of a man of action. For three years, Rabin and Peres, who became Defense Minister, fought over everything, including the question of who should get credit for the Entebbe rescue, while the Labor government ran aground. In 1977, Rabin resigned in disgrace after revelations that he and his wife, Leah, had maintained an illegal bank account in the United States. Peres became Labor's leader, only to preside over an immediate defeat. The reign of the party that had founded Israel was broken, and the supremacy of the Likud was to last for the better part of fifteen years.

RIVALRY remained the leitmotiv of the two men's relationship, even in defeat. In his book, written after their most recent, and most crucial, rapprochement, Peres calls Rabin's autobiography, "Service Notebook" (1979), "notoriously tendentious." He describes Rabin as "oversuspicious," and though he concedes that Rabin was "a good military man," he hastens to add that Moshe Dayan did not think so. Peres disputes incident after incident—such as Rabin's claim that Peres had leaked Israeli diplomats' private conversations with Henry Kissinger to the press—and then says that Rabin's accusations would require more rebuttals, and countercharges, than a memoir could properly record.

The two men did establish a détente in time for the 1984 elections, but it was insufficient to bring Labor back into power. Instead, Labor formed a national-unity government with Likud, and Peres served as Prime Minister for two years. He was hampered by the restraints of coalition politics, and his activities were restricted to an effort to undo damage, by withdrawing from Lebanon and lowering inflation. Then, in 1986, following the stipulations of the unity-government agreement, he gave up his office to Yitzhak Shamir. Four years later, the coalition government collapsed on a vote of no confidence partly engineered by Peres, and he spent five weeks trying to forge a coalition to take its place. He fell short and appeared discredited. Rabin, who had lost his treasured job as Defense Minister, blamed Peres for "the stinking maneuver." (Peres barely alludes to the event in his memoir.)



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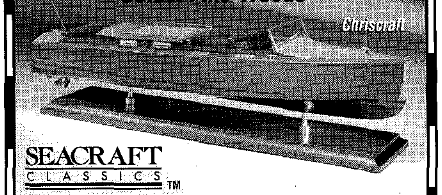

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Once again, the rivals were set to grapple in the wilderness.

In 1992, Peres and Rabin ran against each other for the leadership of Labor, and Rabin prevailed. Peres carried the taint of being a partisan intriguer. And yet as he became more frustrated in his quest for power, he became more of a visionary. He emerged in the late eighties as a would-be architect of a Middle Eastern common market. He foresaw a future of peace in which the old hostilities would be swept away by trade, technology, and knowledge, and Israel would be the fount of economic progress for the entire Middle East. It was a recasting of the Zionist dream of the land of milk and honey, which he detailed in his 1993 book, "The New Middle East." Then came his breakthrough of the Oslo peace agreement.

TODAY, Peres faces what no Israeli leader before him faced: the mass sentiment that produced Yigal Amir. The paramount issue is no longer sheer survival: it is progress. Therein lies the new threat. As the pressures that impinged on Israel have been released, the twisted mythology of Fortress Israel has assumed a greater force: the world of the right wing—especially the world of the ultra-Orthodox settlers on the West Bank—is on the verge of oblivion; Greater Israel, granted by God, is being betrayed; the fight must be to the death. Such hysteria, as Leah Rabin has pointed out, has been heedlessly exploited by the Likud leader, Benjamin Netanyahu.

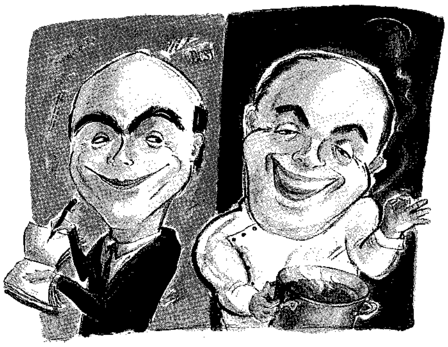
The task of containing the civil strife falls entirely on Peres. He must be the healer and the peacemaker, but these two roles are for the moment incompatible. As long as Peres continues to pursue the peace, he will be seen as a traitor. "I feel I have earned the right to dream," he writes. "So much that I dreamed in the past was dismissed as fantasy but has now become thriving reality." Of course, for the right wing that is precisely the problem.

In September of 1993, after the signing of the peace accords on the South Lawn of the White House, Rabin shook Yasir Arafat's hand, but his reluctance was obvious. He stepped back into his place and whispered to Peres, "You are next." When Arafat extended his hand, Peres grasped it without hesitation. His mind was already tracing elaborate plans for a golden age of the future. But now he does not need to chase after visions. History has snared him at last. ♦

STAR STRUCK

What does a French chef have to do to win Michelin's top rating?

BY JOHN LANCHESTER



William Echikson and Bernard Loiseau

THERE is a kind of madness in all points-based systems for assessing food and drink. In our hearts, we know that our tastes should be safe from the claims of objectivity, and that if we hate Brussels sprouts or like well-done beef or prefer sparkling red Lambrusco to Château Cheval Blanc 1970, we are right, damn it, and there should be nothing more to say. But then the voice of orderliness gets to work, explaining, in that patient, irritating way it has, that nice things are nicer than nasty things; that we can, for the most part, agree on which are which; that we can also, for the most part, agree that some nice things are slightly nicer than others; and that it therefore makes sense to categorize these degrees of niceness, as an aid to clarity and to our fellow-citizens. Before you know it, we have got to where we are now.

Within ten feet of where I am writing these words, I have a small library of guidebooks collected over three years of writing a weekly restaurant column. Among them are several volumes of the British *Good Food Guide* (which used to

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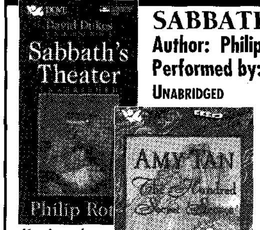

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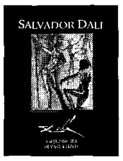

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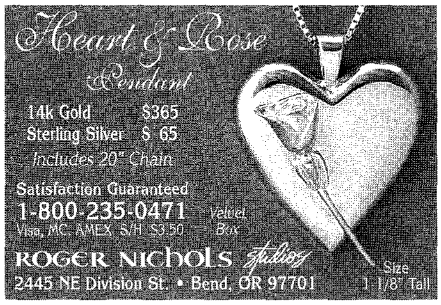

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rate food on a scale of one to twenty but now rates on a scale of one to five, with a helpful asterisk to indicate "a particularly fine example within its numeric classification"), four old copies of the French *Guide GaultMillau* (which also uses a twenty-point system, and awards up to four toques), and copies of Robert Parker's books on Bordeaux and Burgundy (he grades wines on a scale of one to a hundred, though all wines automatically get fifty points, presumably as a "thank you" for being wine, as opposed to brake fluid or Geritol).

Amid the Babel of ratings and judgments, the book that stands out is the red *Guide Michelin* for France. It is the oldest of all the points-awarding publications; it is also the best-selling, the most influential, the most highly respected, and the most widely perceived as authoritative, not least by chefs—this last fact being crucial to its enduring status. Somebody has to award the accolade that graces the best restaurants in the country (which to the French means the best in the world), and that somebody is the *Guide Michelin*, whose three-star top rating is currently held by twenty restaurants in France and another fifteen in the rest of Europe.

WILLIAM ECHIKSON is an American journalist who lives in Paris. He has written an ingenuous, likable book, "Burgundy Stars: A Year in the Life of a Great French Restaurant" (Little, Brown; $22.95), which tells the story of how the *Guide Michelin* got to be where it is, and of the successful attempt of one chef, Bernard Loiseau, to join the three-star Michelin élite. The *Guide* was the brainchild of André Michelin, the co-founder, with his brother, of the tire company, who introduced it in 1900 as a giveaway. It was firmly targeted at the motorist—this being motoring in its early, heroic period, so wonderfully celebrated by Proust in "The Remembrance of Things Past." (The car, Proust wrote, "helps us to feel with a more lovingly exploring hand, with a more delicate precision, the true geometry, the beautiful proportions of the earth.") The first *Guide* was three hundred and ninety-nine pages long: it had a fifty-eight-page section on automobile know-how, followed by a list, arranged alphabetically by town, of places where the doughty motorist could eat and sleep.

Michelin started charging for the *Guide* in 1920. By 1926, it was an established hit, and Michelin began to recommend restaurants with a star—or, as it is sometimes known, a "rosette." (The beautiful, functional but friendly design and typography of the *Guide*—not least that amiably bloblike rosette—must have contributed to its success.) A second star followed in 1931 and a third—you can't stop progress—in 1933.

It's this star system that is the key to the *Guide's* power. The *Guide* doesn't describe restaurants; it judges them. It doesn't justify its ratings; it simply publishes them. This never-apologize, never-explain character gives it a wonderfully detached, impersonal air; it seems to speak with the lofty, objective voice of French gastronomy itself. Michelin goes to great lengths to preserve its aura, as is evidenced by the studiedly reclusive behavior of its director, Bernard Naegellen, who has allowed himself to be photographed by the press only once, and then from behind, and by the *Guide's* dealings with chefs. As Echikson tells it:

> Once a year, chefs are allowed to visit Naegellen at the Paris headquarters. Naegellen enters the conference room and drops a bulging folder onto the table. Inside it are letters from clients, satisfied, less satisfied, and least satisfied. Michelin watches its mail with care. It receives about twenty-five thousand letters a year from readers, describing their experiences in restaurants. All this voluminous correspondence is filed. Like a defendant at a criminal trial, the chef is allowed to read the accusations. But he has no lawyer to defend him. "All the Michelin people do is show you the letters," Bernard [Loiseau] said. "They never say anything."

There are thought to be about twenty Michelin inspectors. (When asked how many he employs, Naegellen responded, "A certain number.") They eat anonymously, as all restaurant reviewers should but as a good number in France do not—many French food journalists, Echikson says, "have not paid for a meal since they started writing"—though they do identify themselves after paying the bill. They spend two weeks on the road and then two weeks at the head office writing up reports. It takes one inspector ten years to cover the whole country, and then he (the *Guide* says that the

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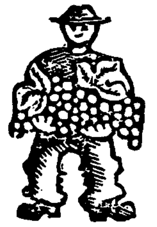

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feat of eating as many as fourteen restaurant meals a week is a man's job) starts again. And the inspectors pride themselves on not giving anything away. Here's what happened when one ate at Bernard Loiseau's restaurant in 1990, and then flashed his Michelin I.D.:

> "May I please see Monsieur Loiseau?" he asked.
>
> Bernard came running.
>
> "How was the meal?" he asked him, with trepidation.
>
> The inspecteur responded that the fish portions were on the small side. He offered neither further criticism nor praise. Bernard snapped his fingers and asked for "the plans." A receptionist rushed to get the architect's drawings for La Côte d'Or's renovation. Bernard unfolded all the plans on a table. The inspecteur said nothing, not a single word.

THE *Guide's* culture of silence, authority, and impersonality prevails. But a backlash was inevitable, and it came not from the chefs but from the press—specifically, a reporter named Henri Gault and the man who was first his editor and later his collaborator, Christian Millau. In 1968, following up on their success with a culinary guide to Paris, the two men began publishing a culinary magazine called *Le Nouveau Guide*, and in 1972 they began publishing a culinary guide to France. The simplest way of characterizing their work is to say that it was the opposite of Michelin's: it was colloquial, lively, gossipy, opinionated, insiderish, and volatile. Gault and Millau were a breath of fresh air, no question. But they were also something more, in that their polemical style helped to launch a culinary movement that became both the most influential and the most derided of the century—a movement that began in October, 1973, when *Le Nouveau Guide* published an article called "Vive la Nouvelle Cuisine Française."

A number of factors were at work here. The first was that, as journalists, the duo needed something to write about, and nothing ever serves that purpose so well as announcing the existence of a new phenomenon and declaring oneself to be its champion. Second, throughout the history of cooking nothing recurs quite so reliably and regularly as the desire for novelty. (The first book to take its title from the phrase "nouvelle cuisine"—"La Nouvelle Cuisine avec de Nouveaux Menus," by Menon—was

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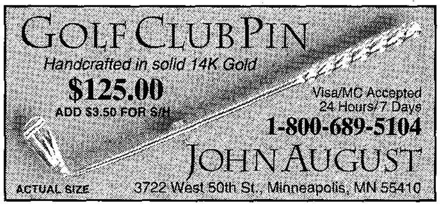

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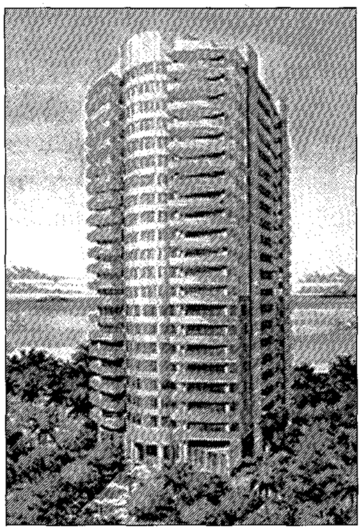

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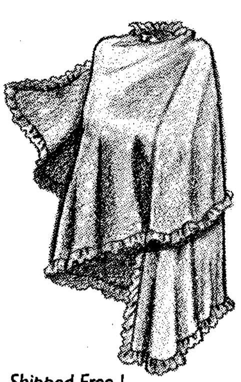
published in 1742.) Third, and most important, Gault and Millau were right: there was a new generation of talented cooks in France, and they were attempting a new, lighter, more inventive style of cooking.

Now, of course, nouvelle cuisine, especially in its more lamely imitative and lumpen versions, is widely viewed as a culinary wrong turning: food that, in Julia Child's words, "is so beautifully arranged on the plate—you know someone's fingers have been all over it." But some chefs see it differently. It was, in large part, thanks to nouvelle cuisine that cookery came to be accepted as one of the creative professions. It freed chefs from having to cook a received repertoire of dishes, and instead emphasized the value of originality. At the same time, in a phenomenon that the Francophile travel writer John Ardagh has called "the revolt of the serfs," chefs began to have an increasing degree of economic independence: the stars of nouvelle cuisine—Paul Bocuse, Michel Guérard, the Troisgros brothers, Roger Vergé, Alain Chapel, Charles Barrier, François Bise—all owned their own restaurants; they were chef-entrepreneurs rather than chef-employees.

They were also chef-celebrities. Whereas the trio of great chefs who paved the way for nouvelle cuisine (Fernand Point, André Pic, and Alexandre Dumaine) were well known in the food world, their successors were bona-fide stars. The pioneer was Paul Bocuse, who, in Echikson's words, "more than any other single figure . . . turned the three-star Michelin chef into a celebrity," in which capacity Bocuse's commercial interests now range from "a restaurant at the Epcot Centre, in Florida, to a cooking school in Japan, to a line of canned foods." It was Bocuse who thought up the exquisitely elegant solution to the problem of what to do with visiting journalists and food writers: he took them to the local market, where they never failed to marvel at the sight of the legendary chef inspecting choice produce before taking it back to the restaurant and transforming it into edible magic. This simple publicity stunt has, as the thriller writer and gourmet Len Deighton says in his lively "ABC of French Food," "endorsed the myth that 'real chefs' buy their food in person



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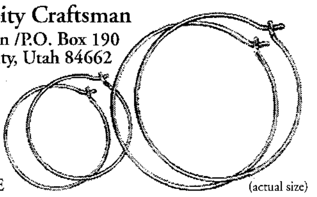

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each morning." Real Michelin three-star chefs, however, do something very different, as Echikson describes in the case of Bernard Loiseau:

> Like most great chefs, Bernard almost never grilled meat, broiled fish, or put anything in the oven. He directed the show. He was the creator, dreaming up the recipes and making sure the final result tasted sublime. In most French kitchens, the key figure is the number-two man, called the *chef de cuisine*. This is the person who runs the kitchen, who orders supplies, who perfects the menu, and who directs all the preparation. As owner-chef, Bernard had many other things besides cooking to worry about, obtaining loans from the banks, running the hotel, and dealing with the press. These days, star chefs are often away from the restaurants on promotional tours.

Loiseau, the hero of "Burgundy Stars," likes to think of Paul Bocuse as his spiritual father. Like Bocuse, Loiseau is a chef-owner, a chef-innovator, and a chef-celebrity. His restaurant is in the small northern Burgundy town of Saulieu, and it is called La Côte d'Or—or, rather, it used to be called La Côte d'Or. Now it's called Bernard Loiseau La Côte d'Or, with the larger typeface reserved for the chef's name. It is an important restaurant in the history of French gastronomy, since it was once the home of Alexandre Dumaine. Dumaine retired in 1964; by 1975, when Loiseau took over the restaurant, it had gone from three stars to none. It was Loiseau's ambition to reverse that decline—a feat that had never been achieved.

THERE isn't much suspense to Echikson's account of how Loiseau got his third star, in March, 1991, since it's pretty clear from the outset what is going to happen. (Echikson spent a year at La Côte d'Or, but it was almost two years after Loiseau's triumph—as we learn not from the book's narrative but from the acknowledgments at the end.) The interest of "Burgundy Stars" lies in its over-all portrait of the state of French gastronomy and in the stories it tells about the people whose lives revolve around the restaurant, among them Eric the waiter, and his search for a super-pungent Époisse cheese; and Lyonel the sommelier, and his attempt to win the coveted title of Best Young Sommelier in France. Then, there are the suppliers: Colette Giraud and her goats; Michel Marache and his salmon; Jacques Sulem and his jam; and Jean-François Vadot

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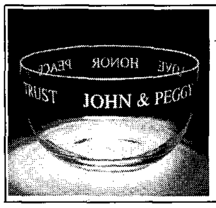

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and his snails. The fabulous clientele also comes in for inspection, notably François Mitterrand, with his appetite for shellfish and his roving eye ("The president . . . took his favorite seat . . . from there, he had a direct view of the décolletés of the elegant women sitting at the next table"). The most vivid character is the energetic, impulsive Loiseau, whom Henri Gault describes as "the nicest, most naïve, enthusiastic guy." One of the things that make Loiseau particularly appealing is his tendency to outsmart himself, whether in an attempt to switch frog suppliers (the new man, a local, delivers them wrigglingly alive, and they take hours to kill and skin) or in an attempt to think up a punchy, promotable name for his style of cooking. Loiseau considers this problem at length and comes up with *cuisine à l'eau*, or "water cooking," a tag that proves sadly vulnerable to cheap shots: "No less than his good friend Bocuse came up with the definitive wisecrack when he was strolling along the banks of the river Saône. 'What a pity,' Bocuse said. 'If only Bernard could see all that sauce going to waste.' "

These days, Loiseau prefers to call his style *cuisine de jus*—the cuisine of essences. It's not a bad name, and it conveys his way of emphasizing direct tastes and minimizing the use of fats. He is without doubt an exceptionally talented and inventive chef. I have to say, however, that the main impression made on me by a recent visit to Bernard Loiseau La Côte d'Or (in the food world, we call this "research") was of its vertigo-inducing expensiveness. My wife and I both ate the *menu dégustation*, or tasting menu; with an apéritif each, a half bottle of Puligny-Montrachet 1991 and a bottle of Gevrey-Chambertin 1991, a bottle of mineral water, and a cup of tea each, the check came to two thousand eight hundred and ten francs, or about five hundred and seventy dollars—which is by a considerable margin the most expensive meal I have ever eaten. Personally, I'm inclined to think that no meal can ever be worth quite that much. It can be worth a lot, even a hell of a lot, but not two hundred and eighty-five dollars a head.

"Burgundy Stars" helps to explain why La Côte d'Or costs so much and, in doing so, exposes the worst effect of the *Guide Michelin*. Over the years, Loiseau "observed how other chefs won the precious three stars and recognized that it wasn't only food that counted." It's an item of faith in the food world that Michelin expects a certain level of luxury from its three-star restaurants: if you want to join the club, you have to provide the right kind of opulence. So, Echikson recounts, Loiseau borrows three million dollars, he renovates his restaurant and—hey, presto!—two months after reopening he has his third star.

The notion that you can buy your way to a third Michelin star is a sore point with the *Guide*. "Don't think your renovation helped," Bernard Naegellen tells Loiseau when he calls to give him the news of his triumph. "Bernard didn't believe Naegellen," Echikson says (and neither do I), though that doesn't stop Bernard playing along with the Michelin line in public. The upshot? As "Burgundy Stars" ends, Bernard Loiseau La Côte d'Or has its three stars; Loiseau has a hundred-thousand-dollar contract to spend ten days a year at a restaurant bearing his name in Japan (unfortunately, the premises were destroyed in the Kobe earthquake); he has a contract with Unilever to let his name appear on a new line of soups; and the restaurant needs to repay the bank to the tune of ten thousand dollars a day. Hence that five-hundred-and-seventy-dollar check. Still, it's nice to know that this kind of expense has its consequence for the *Guide* as well as for us ordinary eaters. "In recent years," Echikson says, "Michelin officials have admitted that sales of more than six hundred thousand Red Guides, at about twenty-five dollars a copy, are not enough to make up for the expense of paying all those hotel and restaurant bills." This means that a gross annual take of fifteen million dollars doesn't cover the overheads and expenses generated by twenty-odd inspectors. *Formidable.* ♦

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[*From the October 29th issue of the Raleigh* (*N.C.*) *News & Observer*]

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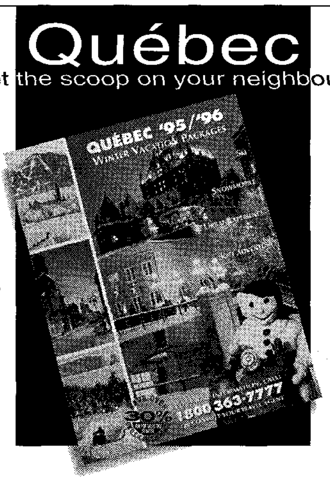

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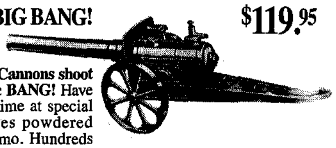

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BOOKS BRIEFLY NOTED

Shards of Memory

by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala
(Doubleday; $22.95)

Jhabvala's twelfth novel is a magic carpet of a book: you just sink into it and let it take you away—first to a plush New York household, where a succession of children grow up with a succession of doting grandparents, and then to the lesbian aunts' house in London, where some of these children and the romances that preceded them were conceived. The greatest romance, however, surrounds the aunts' guru, a charming con man who has flirted in a different manner with each member of this wonderful, complicated family.

Diana: The Goddess Who Hunts Alone

by Carlos Fuentes; translated from the Spanish by Alfred Mac Adam
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $22)

This doomed romance from the radical-chic era (when sex was glib and it was politics that hurt) has an entertaining, Updikean explicitness. Fuentes scarcely bothers to disguise his persona—the man is a Mexican author named Carlos, the woman unmistakably modelled after Jean Seberg—but the reminiscent narrator has larger concerns: like many aging lovers, he has turned his sexual history into a breeding ground for myth. "Perhaps what the gringos lack," Carlos remarks, "is a serious sense of death instead of a tragic sense of fame." This book has both.

When the World Was Steady

by Claire Messud
(Granta; $19.95)

This is a fine first novel—and the "first" is deceptive, for its author has the daring and the assurance to take on Iris Murdoch-like questions about goodness and truth. Her unlikely seekers are two middle-aged sisters who have long been estranged: Emmy, unhappily divorced but fearless, who has fallen into the entourage of a corrupt family in Bali; and Virginia, a London spinster whose narrow Christianity has been upended by her glimpse of the Reverend grappling with a divinity student. The sisters' worlds finally swing back into an uneasy, compromised steadiness; Messud's gaze, though, never wavers.

Time & Money: New Poems

by William Matthews
(Houghton Mifflin; $19.95)

A self-described ironist, whose interests range from Dante to Charles Mingus, stopping along the way for Babe Ruth, Bob Marley, and Luciano Pavarotti, Matthews writes, "The louder they quote/Dr. Johnson, the faster I count the spoons." The application of intelligence and classical training to every stratum of American life results in poems that revel in etymology and delight in colloquialism. Underlying the poet's humor is an unsentimental alertness extending to elegy, as when he writes, "We live as the direct object of verbs/we hoped we could command."

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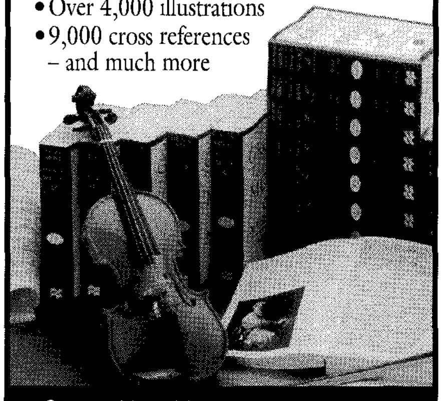

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As if at home, there prowls a cat..."
— CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

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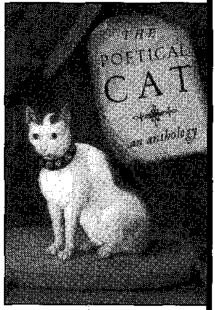

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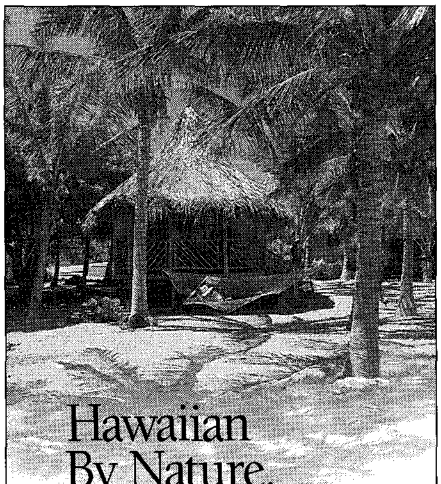
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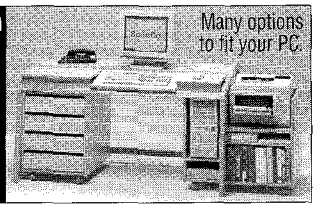
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MY FAIR FELLA

Julie Andrews on Broadway, and Uta Hagen in "Mrs. Klein."

BY JOHN LAHR

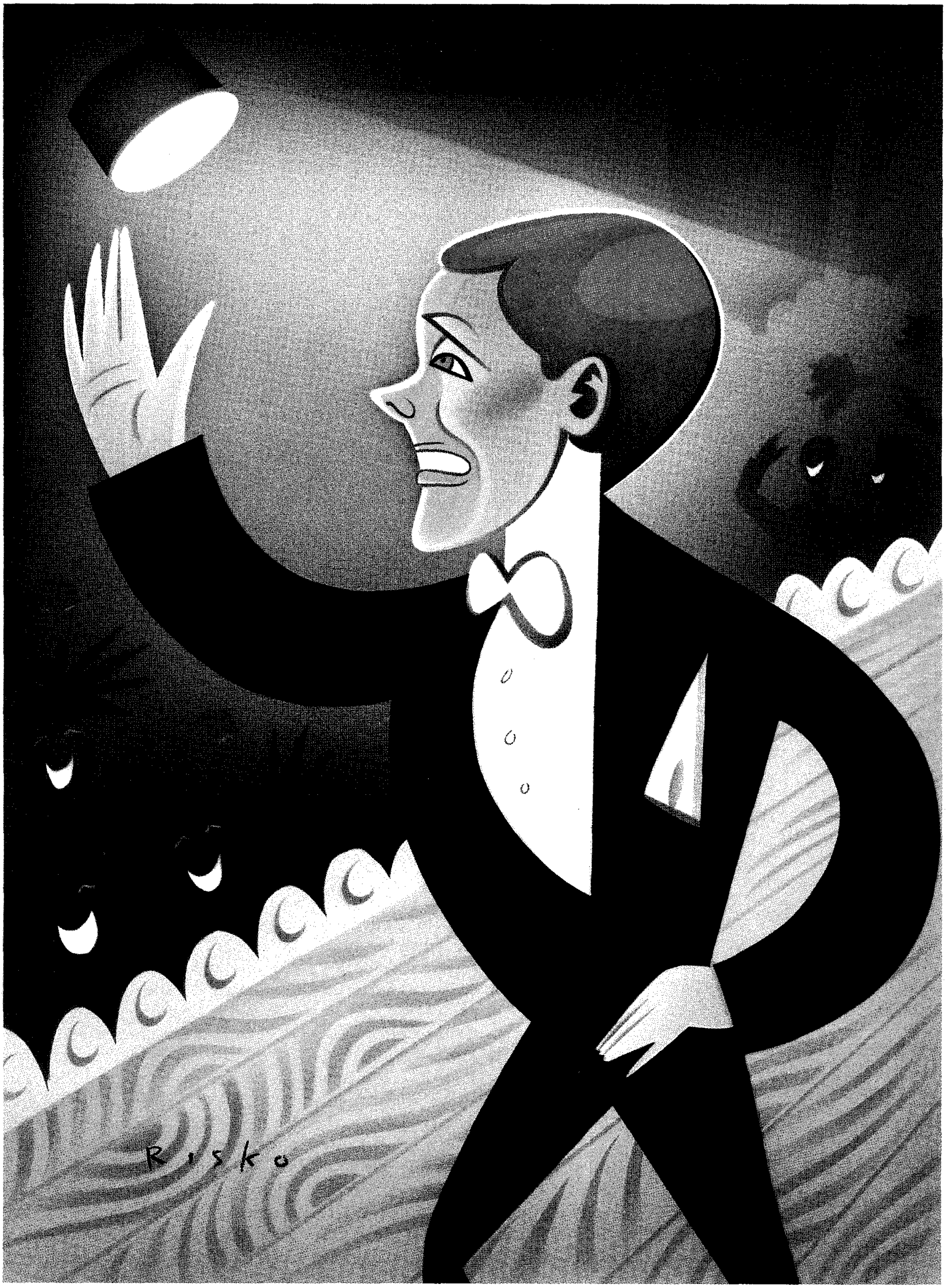
A STAR has to shine. For more than forty years, Julie Andrews has been dazzling theatre audiences with her bright soprano voice and her chipper decency in vehicles like "The Boy Friend," "Camelot," and, especially, "My Fair Lady." Andrews exhibits none of the presenting symptoms of a star's crazy imperialism—that hunger to own some considerable part of the public's imagination. If she experiences any such vulgar need, she keeps it well hidden behind the calm façade of her still beautiful peaches-and-cream countenance and her very English reserve. Onstage, she doesn't seem to crave the public's love or to go after it. It's not that Andrews is chilly or mysterious; she's slow to kindle, but she does burn, and this combustible quality is part of the drama she brings to her best romantic roles. However, this energy is elusive: it can be generated only with the right ingredients. A star without proper material is like a fire with sodden wood: you get smoke but no heat. "Victor/Victoria," the Broadway version of the 1982 Blake Edwards film, for which Andrews received an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress, is a case in point. The promise of Andrews's forty-carat charm has been enough to earn this expensive production fifteen million dollars in advance sales. Andrews has delivered an audience to the producers; but, given the show's generic score, its patchwork book, and its lame lyrics, she can't deliver her star power. The actress, who is sixty, has vowed to stay in the show until it recoups its investment. "But who's going to want to see her at eighty?" a producer friend of mine said.

"Victor/Victoria" hitches its star to the bandwagon of sexual politics. Julie Andrews plays Victoria Grant, a down-at-heel opera singer stranded in Paris in 1933. Unable to find work, she cuts her hair and impersonates a female impersonator. In this roundabout way, she wins cabaret stardom playing herself. Victoria's dirty little secret is that she's a heterosexual female. As taboo violations go, this hasn't posed much of a threat to Western civilization. The stakes of her deception are not very high: if she is exposed, she stands to lose only her star status—a status we have to take on faith, since there's little evidence of Victoria's showstopping talent onstage. Here, under Blake Edwards's labored direction, the contemporary gender-bending formula of boy-meets-boy is added to the old formula of boy-meets-girl. "We're all meant to cherish one another,/It's not a crime to love each other," the cast sings at the musical's happy ending, thus turning the polymorphous perverse into polymorphous commerce.

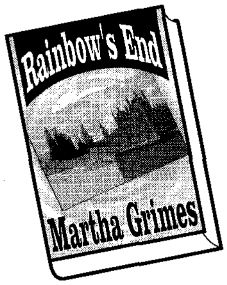
The show's parade of banality begins on the first, flat-footed beat. Tony Roberts, who plays an aging pansy named Carroll Todd, saunters across a square to the decadent *boîte* where he performs:

> Paris can be
> A dangerous affair
> She offers far more follies
> Than the Folies-Bergère.

Here, in Todd's louche world, you can tell who the homosexuals are: they're the ones wearing silver-lamé stockings with garter belts, or spit curls and skirts. The show is arguing that gender doesn't matter, but in this production it clearly does. The hypocrisy of the enterprise is incarnated in the robustly butch Roberts, who the audience knows is really only play-



Girls will be boys and boys will be girls: Julie Andrews in "Victor/Victoria."



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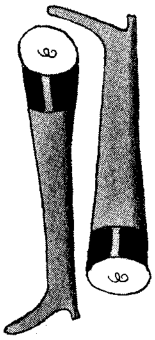
ing. "Victor/Victoria" is about the whiff of money, not the whiff of danger. Victoria's shuck of the unwitting Parisian public is likewise perpetrated on us by "Victor/Victoria," which tries to pass as liberal entertainment. Still, Roberts, who is full of easygoing bonhomie, does well. (Incidentally, he makes a fetching, Hasty Pudding kind of queen in Willa Kim's gold-lamé gown and skullcap.)

On this wintry night, Andrews's Victoria Grant washes up at the club, shivering from the cold, and soon she's auditioning and shattering glass with a high note. Andrews makes her entrance in a pink coat, an orange scarf, and a turquoise beret. It's hard to miss her, and even harder to believe that it's winter. Despite her "legitimate" voice, she flunks the audition. Later, Todd discovers her huddled on his doorstep. The stage picture is so reminiscent of "My Fair Lady" that you almost expect Andrews to break into full-throated Cockney song. The familiar motifs continue once Victoria is ensconced for the night in Todd's garret. Quicker than you can say "Rex Harrison," Todd thinks up the lifesaving scam that will take Grant from hardscrabble singer to posh star. He cuts her hair, gives her a game plan, and becomes her guide through the demimonde. At a stroke, we have a kind of "My Fair Fella," where it's not grammar but gender that Andrews has to practice in order to succeed. As in "My Fair Lady," the drama is in Andrews's makeover and in whether her masquerade will pass. Victoria's dissatisfaction with her sex is set out in the clumsy broad strokes of "If I Were a Man," which is positioned, like "Wouldn't It Be Loverly," as a fantasy of empowerment that ultimately comes true. For all these similarities to "My Fair Lady," there is one startling, significant difference: here both Roberts and Andrews sing like Professor Higgins. In the absence of any really distinct melodies in the late Henry Mancini's score, most of the musical numbers aren't so much sung as spoken. Almost none of the songs give Andrews the chance to sing out. It's a waste of her talent and of our time.



It's not that you can't believe your eyes, it's that you can't believe your ears. The lazy lyrics, by Leslie Bricusse, seem to have originated in some weird fifties time warp. In "Le Jazz Hot," a song that's supposed to commemorate the birth of jazz, we hear that "before they knew it, it was whizzing around the world." "Whizzing" is about as vivid as Bricusse gets. "Victor/Victoria" is essentially a revue, and in a revue wit is everything. But in Bricusse's case wit is off the menu. In "Louis Says," which opens Act II, and which features Andrews portraying Marie Antoinette, surrounded by a chorus in blue, green, and yellow periwigs, the best Bricusse can do is "My life's a big bowl of *fraises* / Who cares what Louis says." Bricusse tops even this gaucherie in the triumphal finale. "Victoria!" the hard-working chorus sings. "What a victor you are!"

The only player who seems to be enjoying herself, and whom the audience really enjoys, is the leggy Rachel York, as the lippy chippy Norma Cassidy, whose mouth is full of malaprops. She adamantly believes that Victoria is a guy. Otherwise, it would be "a felonious attempt to defrock the public," she tells her beau, King Marchan (the handsome, hairy-chested Michael Nouri), who is smitten with Victor or Victoria: in the end, he doesn't care which. York provides Andrews with her best moment, when Norma and Victoria (as Victor) tango together at a night club. The dopey Norma thinks she's dancing with a guy, and her partner is trying desperately to lead like one. In York's loud mouth, the sludge of Bricusse's lines has at least a modicum of fun and clout. "When I see the Eiffel Tower / I have to go and take a shower," she caterwauls in "Paris Makes Me Horny." She goes on, selling the song hard: "Been to Munich / Where every guy's a eunuch." You can almost hear Bricusse thumbing his rhyming dictionary, but York's big voice and her big body have a way of making you forget your misery. At the end of all this folderol, Todd gets King Marchan's bodyguard (Gregory Jbara), Victoria gets King Marchan, and the audience, blessedly, gets to go home. But first, having parted with up to seventy-five dollars to see Julie Andrews, the paying customers stand and applaud their investment. If you stand for that, you'll stand for anything.

PERVERSITY takes an altogether different form in Nicholas Wright's smart, if schematic, "Mrs. Klein," which had a successful West End run a few years ago; it's now at the Lucille Lortel Theatre downtown. Two London psychoanalysts—the famous Melanie Klein and her less renowned daughter, Melitta ("little Melanie")—face off in a murderous argument and proceed to browbeat each other with theory. Uta Hagen plays Mrs. Klein, and the German actress shares with her Viennese character a Mitteleuropean pedigree, a commanding presence, and an indubitable brilliance. Klein, who analyzed each of her three children, had a genius for understanding—but not, Wright argues, for connecting. In the play, "The world must wait" is her motto when she works with her child analysands—but not, unfortunately, with her own children. Her bumptious daughter's antics are a way of demanding attention and paying her back for neglect. Klein, in her 1957 essay "Envy and Gratitude," brilliantly examined how poor parental nurturing leads a child to spoil even the good things he or she takes in. "Mrs. Klein," in its dissection of Klein's tempestuous relationship with her daughter, which led finally to estrangement, shrewdly explores the autobiographical parallels to Klein's seminal thesis.

The high-strung, overwrought Melitta (the excellent Laila Robins) seems determined to spoil her mother's goodness: she's hellbent on attacking her mother's theories in public and her emotional stability in private. She claims—wrongly, it turns out—that Klein's son Hans, who died in a mountain-climbing accident, was a suicide, a victim of his mother's castrating interference. Into this family feud Wright factors an interloper—a needy, intelligent German émigrée named Paula (the sad-eyed, compelling Amy Wright), who by the end of the play has maneuvered herself from the role of disciple into that of the "good" daughter. Meanwhile, the wrangling with the "bad" daughter, which is always literate, lurches at times toward parody. "He killed the you in him" is how Melitta sees Hans's "suicide." Klein spins the interpretation against Melitta. "He wished to save the me he loved from his sadistic onslaughts," she says. "So he killed them. And in doing so he killed himself. . . . When did you save me from your sadistic onslaughts?"

A little of this clinical palaver goes a long way, but the play eventually succeeds, not so much with words as with a chilling conclusion. Melitta decides, finally and forever, to break with her mother, only to return, in the end, as Klein is beginning her analysis of Paula. Melitta rings the bell at the locked front door. "You feel perhaps that you've replaced Melitta as my daughter?" Klein asks Paula. (Later, as Paula Heimann, the real Paula broke with Klein and joined the Independent Group, for psychoanalysts who adhered neither to Klein's nor to Anna Freud's approach.) Paula, on the couch, answers, "I have." Melitta's incessant ringing momentarily interrupts them. Then Klein turns back to her task. "I'm listening," she says, as the doorbell continues to ring and the lights fade.

The spectacle of these fierce, manipulative, venomous females has a powerful, and sometimes even overwhelming, effect on audiences. As I was leaving the theatre, the man in front of me stopped in his tracks at the exit. "I'm afraid to go out in the street," he said to his male companion. "It's all right," his friend said. "Fifty per cent of the people out there have penises." ♦

DIETARY TIPS FROM ALL OVER

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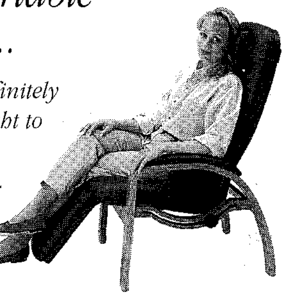

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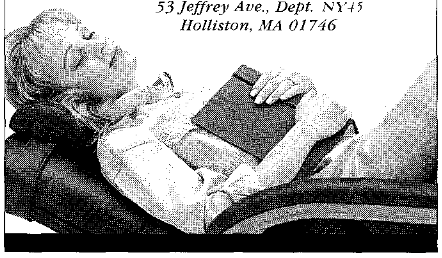

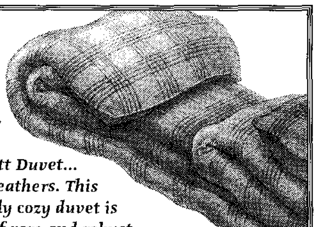

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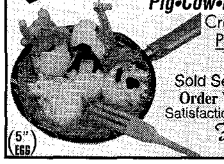

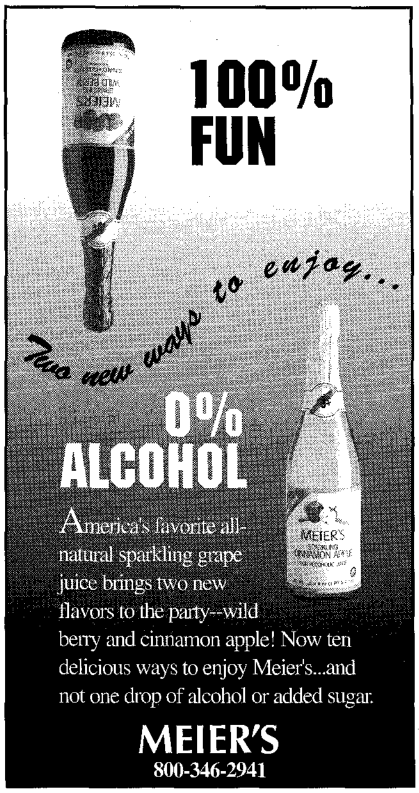
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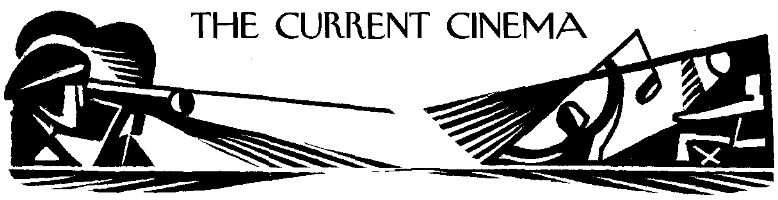


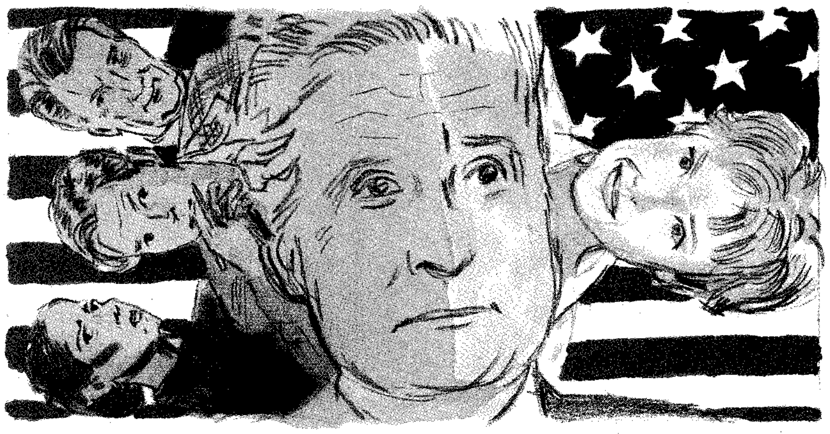
THE CURRENT CINEMA

LOVER-IN-CHIEF

Cupid pays a visit to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

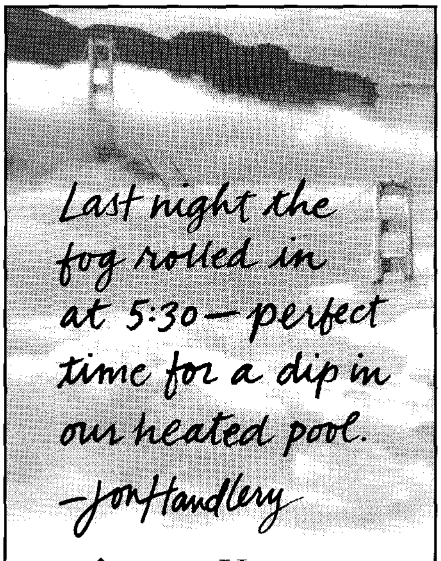
BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

In Rob Reiner's "The American President," the Chief Executive, Andrew Shepherd (Michael Douglas), is a widower—a lonely guy in the Oval Office. His unusual marital status gives him an advantage, of sorts, over previous movie Presidents: he's eligible to become the hero of a romantic comedy. The script, by Aaron Sorkin, wastes no time setting him up with a nice girl named Sydney Ellen Wade (Annette Bening), who is lobbying him for tougher environmental laws. The trick to romantic comedy is to invent plausible (or, in the screwball variation, hilariously implausible) obstacles to the course of what the audience instantly perceives as true love. The obstacle in this picture is the Presidency itself. These lovers have no privacy: they're intruded upon constantly by the huge and overbearingly attentive White House staff, hounded by voracious journalists, and scrutinized maliciously by the President's political opponents, who are salivating at the opportunity to raise a "character" issue that might chip away at Shepherd's daunting sixty-three-percent approval rating. (The conventional wisdom, we're told, is that Shepherd, a moderate-to-liberal Democrat, became President largely because the death of his wife, only a year before the election, made him immune to personal attacks by the Republicans.) In a sense, the dopey premise of "The American President" works as it's intended to: it creates enough crises to keep the lovers from achieving their destined bliss until an hour and fifty minutes has passed. But if contrivance this monumental is what it takes to put over an "old-fashioned" romantic comedy these days, the genre is in big trouble.



Head of state falls head over heels: Michael Douglas surrounded by aides (Anna Deavere Smith, Michael J. Fox, and Martin Sheen) and his favorite lobbyist (Annette Bening).

And if "The American President" is a hit, its success will be a sign that moviegoers have scaled down their expectations for romantic comedy—just as voters have learned to make do with uninspiring candidates in the last few Presidential elections. The opening credits feature a montage of Presidential portraits, which, combined with Marc Shaiman's reverent music, evokes the grandeur and dignity of the office: we see Washington, Jackson, Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, Wilson, F.D.R., Kennedy—no one more recent than L.B.J. The absence of Reagan, Bush, and Clinton is pointed, and canny: why risk provoking laughs or hisses from the audience? When Andrew Shepherd comes onto the screen, we're primed to



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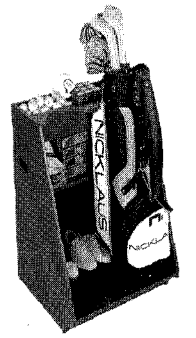

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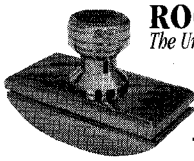

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judge him according to the lofty standards of the sober-looking men in that gallery, and by the end of the picture the filmmakers have all but elevated him to the pantheon. As the movie goes along, his flaws disappear, and we're meant to feel as if something vital—an image of strong, fearless, principled leadership—were being restored before our eyes. In his final speech, Shepherd renounces the political pragmatism that has been his most serious shortcoming, and gives the public an unaccustomed taste of candid, uncalculated discourse on controversial issues: he defends the First Amendment (even to the point of praising the A.C.L.U. and asserting the rights of flag burners), calls for a complete ban on handguns and assault weapons, endorses strict anti-pollution regulations, and, for good measure, responds to his opponents' innuendos about his affair by denouncing them as moral cowards and affirming his right to live his life as he sees fit.

"The American President," that is to say, is designed to turn back the clock—to a time before poll-watching timidity, New Democrat waffling, lowball campaign tactics, a scandal-hungry media culture, and the deadly art of spin combined to cut the heart out of American liberalism. There's a little Dukakis in Andrew Shepherd. He's a former professor with a tendency toward intellectual aloofness: his reaction to the Republicans' sleaze tactics is a dignified silence that only makes matters worse. But mostly he's Bill Clinton: a regular guy, witty and affable, whose essential decency is marred by a fatal willingness to compromise his principles. (And Shepherd has a daughter—played by Shawna Waldron—who looks to be around Chelsea's age.) Reiner and Sorkin appear to have conceived this President as a progressive superhero, undoing the Democrats' recent blunders and avenging the horrors visited on society by Republicans from Reagan to Gingrich. "The American President" is obviously intended as a wake-up call for our current President and for all those traditional Great Society Democrats who have grown sluggish and listless: in the course of this movie, Andrew Shepherd gradually sheds his mild-mannered Clark Kent disguise and transforms himself into a liberal Man of Steel.

The film's political message is hopelessly pious and corny—even if you agree

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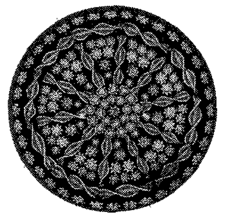

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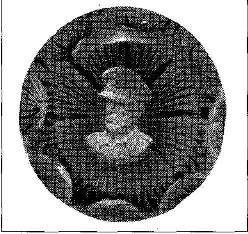

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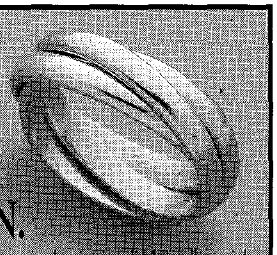

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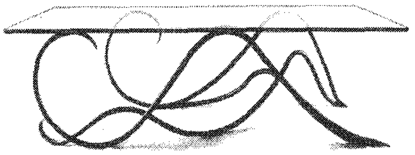

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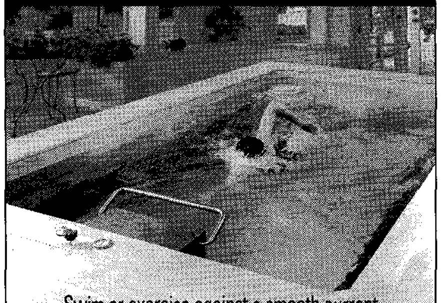

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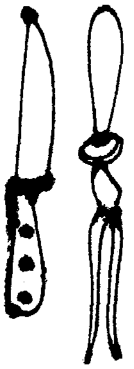
with it—but its very obviousness gives it a kind of sweetness. The agenda is touchingly transparent. (That the movie has an agenda at all automatically makes it superior to Ivan Reitman's 1993 White House comedy, "Dave," which was maddeningly apolitical.) The weak plank in the picture's platform is its attempt to resurrect the flagging spirit of romantic comedy. It's a good thing "The American President" doesn't begin with portraits of Cary Grant, William Powell, James Stewart, Fred Astaire, and David Niven, because it would take more than good intentions and stirring rhetoric to persuade an audience that Michael Douglas belongs in the company of the great romantic leading men. (It's easier to believe that Clinton could turn into F.D.R. than that Douglas could turn into Cary Grant.) Douglas is a bit less monotonous than usual here, and for once he isn't fending off the advances of a predatory female. (This spares us his characteristic grimace of tense, tortured masculine angst.) Easygoing charm is not among his gifts, though. His rigid bearing is effectively Presidential, but he never relaxes enough to be a convincing lover. The script doesn't give him a lot of help. Sorkin piles so many layers of virtue on the character—Shepherd is a constitutional scholar, a devoted father, a decisive Commander-in-Chief, a mean man with a quip, a knowledgeable sports fan, and a dynamo between the sheets—that even a looser actor might have trouble looking natural. And too much of the humor of Shepherd's courtship of Sydney is based on his behaving like a smitten teen-ager. We're meant to howl at the idea that the leader of the Free World is nervous about asking a woman for a date—a notion of wit that's roughly comparable to showing cute nuns blushing at dirty jokes.



But that's pretty much what romantic comedy has been reduced to: adults acting like kids. (See Sandra Bullock in "While You Were Sleeping.") In the genre's few recent commercial successes, such as Reiner's "When Harry Met Sally" (1989) and Nora Ephron's "Sleepless in Seattle" (1993), the filmmakers seem to have expended so much energy devising a workable premise that they didn't have anything left for characters and dialogue. And the premises just get fancier all the time. Sexual freedom is a real problem for this genre, whose comic tension depends entirely on the frustration of desire, and nowadays keeping lovers out of each other's bed requires forcible restraints. Using the White House as a roadblock to romance may represent a new high in dramatic overkill, but it's not fundamentally different from the heavy lifting that was required to sell the romantic dreams of "When Harry Met Sally" and "Sleepless in Seattle." The sad thing is that audiences are so eager to believe in the old-fashioned concept of love that they accept even these second-rate contemporary facsimiles of the ideal. Anyone who remembers how brisk and inventive the best comedies of the thirties and forties were will be dismayed at the feeble repartee and infantile behavior that characterizes movies like "The American President," but viewers' hopes spring eternal: maybe *this* picture will be the one that revives the corpse.

While we wait for the Second Coming, we take our pleasures where we find them. Fortunately, "The American President" has in Annette Bening a spirited and glamorous leading lady, and it also has a large company of veteran supporting actors who know how to squeeze laughs out of ordinary material and minimal screen time. As Shepherd's chief pollster, David Paymer sweats and frets impressively. Richard Dreyfuss, as an odious Republican candidate, rips into his brief scenes with tremendous satirical gusto, and sports a reptilian squint that even Phil Gramm might envy. And Michael J. Fox, as the President's domestic-policy adviser, does a whirlwind impersonation of George Stephanopoulos that jerks the picture to life every time he appears; the performance is a small marvel of comic economy. It's too bad that the movie whose coattails these wonderful actors are attached to is such an empty suit. But the recent history of both movies and politics proves that you really can fool some of the people all the time, and fooling some of the people is all it takes to make a hit. The sobering truth is that if everyone who voted for Ross Perot buys a ticket for "The American President" the movie will be a smash. ◆

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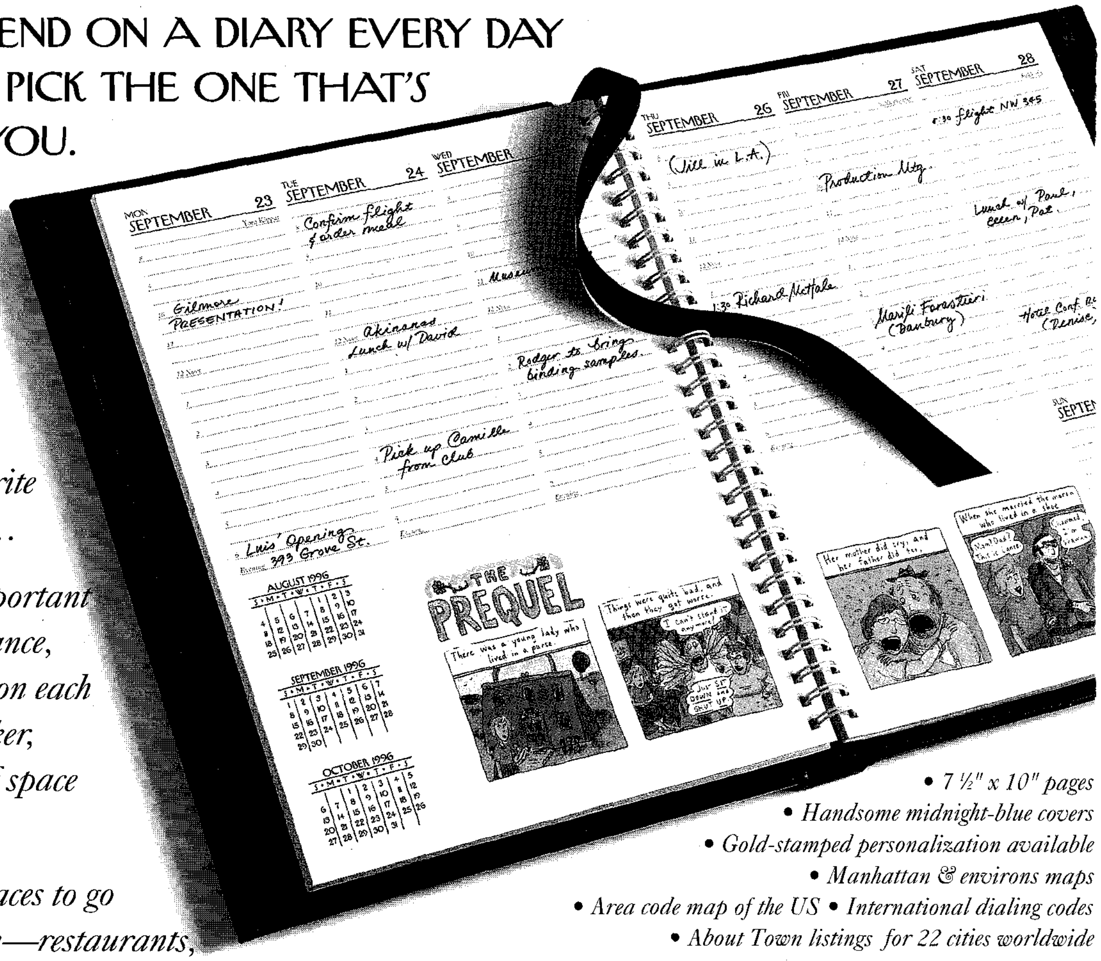
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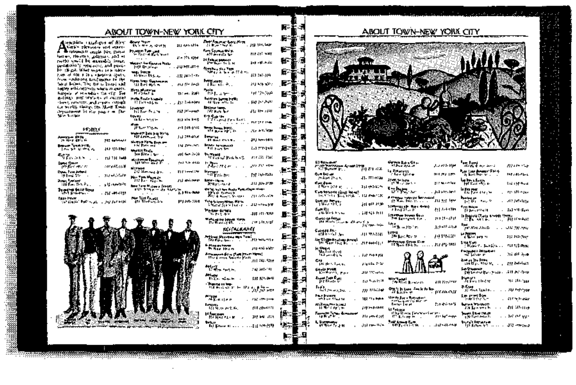
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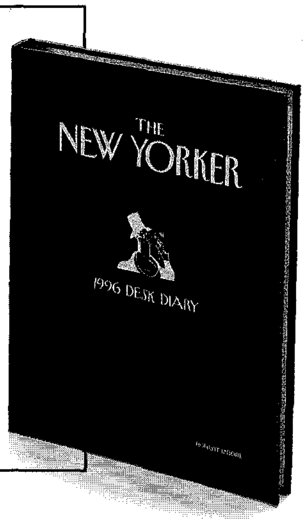
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MUSICAL EVENTS

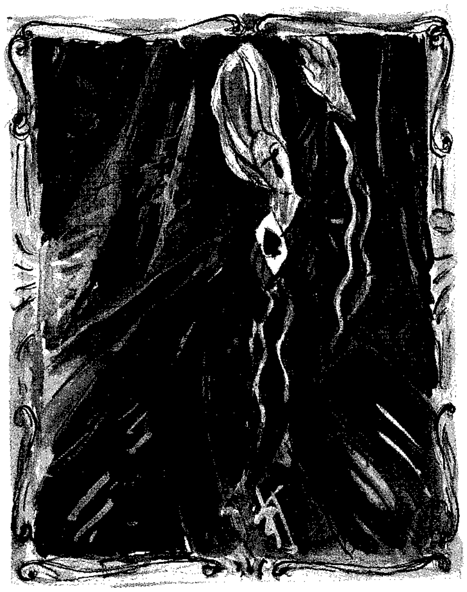
GAMBLING FOR LIFE

The Met unveils a new production of Tchaikovsky's "Queen of Spades."

BY PAUL GRIFFITHS

MANY of the pleasures and pains of the Met's new "Queen of Spades" are well on display before a note is sung. Valery Gergiev, conducting, is characteristically in command from the very first bars—even though here the tone of that command is to educate the players in a certain suspension, a gathering up of music forever awaiting the downbeat. In later episodes, too, there'll be these musical clouds, edged with moonlight by prominent and sweet-toned solo strings, but always chilly from the precision of articulation, pulse, and phrasing. The other sort of weather in this opera—sudden thunderstorm—is no less vivid and beautiful, and no less icily delivered. Passion, in Mr. Gergiev's musical vocabulary, is violent, overwhelming, and fierce, and though he can produce suavity, such an effect is the wonderful pretense of someone with a savage gleam in his eye. The grand dances that occupy much of the score (not just in the ballroom scene but, for example, in the opening chorus of the gaming-room finale) go with pride and splendor, and also with a vehement, and even a cruel, push behind them. Occasionally, the zip is achieved at the expense of faltering ensemble; however, what matters more is that the orchestral performance has the excellent and very Tchaikovskian virtues of bravery and accomplishment—virtues that, when so firmly installed, eliminate the possibility of sentimentality.

Here, then, is one big plus. Another is the design, which again proves itself in the opening minutes. Mark Thompson sets the opera within a great gilt frame, and the first picture we see inside it is of a solitary, stooped figure in a near-black box, with febrile illumination (designed by Paul Pyant) that ripples the perspectives. Just in this momentary vision a great deal has been conveyed about Hermann (or "Ghermann," as the program, with misguided pedantry, insists on styling him): his apartness, the weight upon him, his instability, and the instability, too, of his opera, which recklessly keeps making the leap from objectivity to identification, from giving an account of the hero to becoming his own account of himself and of the world—an account that seems to be the sound of his delirium.


Spectacular visitation: Leonie Rysanek as the ghost of the Countess.

At this point, unfortunately, the figure begins to move, and we move with him from the powerful image of a lone man swept by hurricanes of sound and shadow to the banality of a poor guy getting a deck of cards out of his pocket. This immediately weakens the atmosphere in many ways: by suggesting that the audience has to be given a visual clue to the man's identity, by anticipating what the opera will tell us in its own good time, by asking of Ben Heppner, who takes the

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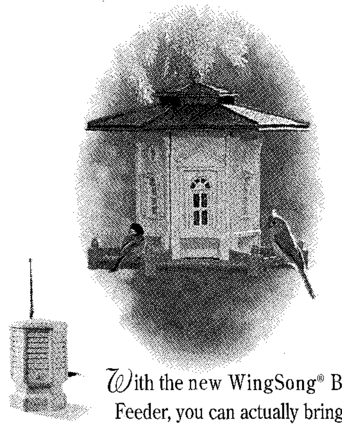

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role of Hermann, a gesture that he can't (as surely nobody could) execute with conviction.

What Mr. Heppner can do is sing. He does so with straightforward, simple force, quite enough to sustain a note at firm volume without a flicker of vibrato or extend a phrase without seeming effort. His performance is impressive, but not as *ex*pressive as it might be if he could find some colors other than the dark gray of consistent gravity and the occasional gold (albeit beautifully done) of head voice, or if he could make the words work for him instead of having them appear a kind of bland treacle through which he must swim. (This last comment applies to several others in the cast as well.) With tousled hair and beard, and with his heavy frame made monumental by the greatcoat he wears throughout the opera, he looks like the Repin portrait of Moussorgsky defying death, but in his singing he doesn't seem a man ravaged and possessed, and in his acting he isn't much helped by Elijah Moshinsky's production, which is effective in the grouping and movement of the chorus but not at all in the detail of personal relationships.

The big spectacular scenes get a lot of assistance, as the opening did, from Mr. Thompson's designs and Mr. Pyant's lighting. There's also a neat use of toy-town models—of St. Petersburg buildings, and of boats for the canal-side scene—which not only look good but operate dramatically by implying a world where human beings, their thoughts, and their feelings are the biggest things around. Since the set and the costumes are mainly monochrome, moments of color can be jolts of significance, either of a generalized kind, as in a patch of blue sky and a sailing red balloon exhilaratingly revealed at the back of the first scene, or made particular by the production, as in the appearance of the Countess's ghost in the red dress of the painting we saw of her in her Parisian youth. (Leonie Rysanek is a jolt of significance all by herself as an old woman who is ruminatively self-obsessed and is capable, in the odd brilliantly clear note, of making the memory of youth become its retrieval.)

Twice, the production's feasting of the eyes tastes wrong. It's a pity to spoil the tease planned by the Tchaikovsky brothers (Peter and his librettist, Modest), that

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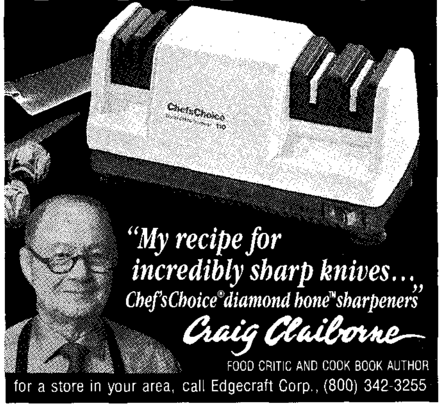

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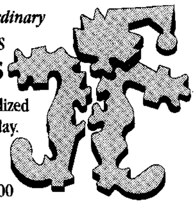

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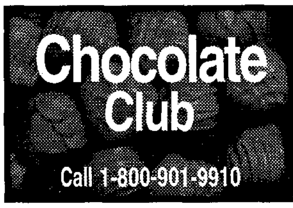

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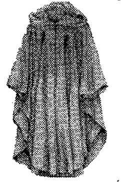

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of Catherine the Great's not arriving: an ermined supernumerary coming on at this point, propped on walking sticks, cuts against the mounting anticipation of the music. Possibly more serious, because more connected with the main substance of the piece, is the realization onstage of a funeral procession to accompany the quasi-liturgical music that enters Hermann's solo scene at the beginning of the last act. The procession, like so much of the production's visual apparatus, is elegant and emblematic, but it shouldn't be there. This is one of those crucial moments when we ought to feel unsure whether we're experiencing Hermann's hallucination or an event in the exterior world—in this case, the Countess's requiem. By acting out the music, the production tilts interpretation in the latter, less interesting direction.

What tilts it back is Mr. Gergiev's fervent exhibition of how so much of the score develops out of ideas that not only are associated with Hermann but are signalled as the sound of his mind. We're left in no doubt that Hermann was Tchaikovsky's reason for composing this opera, which otherwise he peopled with characters who are almost repetitions of prototypes in "Eugene Onegin": Lisa a second Tatyana, Yeletsky another Gremin. (To perform duplicates isn't easy. Karita Mattila, as Lisa, was further troubled at the performance I attended by uneven registers; Dmitri Hvorostovsky, making his house début as Yeletsky, had to endure the exquisite discomfort of a heartthrob playing the dull and decent loser. He sang ably, but his stage presence isn't at all what the glamorous photographs might indicate.)

If we can accept "The Queen of Spades" as not just centered on Hermann but moving into a disconcerting realm where he, a character, appears to be the work's author—and we still can, since the opera outpowers any attempt to tame it, and since the music, which is what matters, is impeccably untamed in Mr. Gergiev's handling of it—then we have found the work's most Mozartian quality. Tchaikovsky's pastiche, even when he's using Mozart themes, is porcelain stuff, limited by his age's view of the composer and totally without the eroticism we'd now expect to find in any Mozart, late or early, real or unreal. But the sense here of a world taken over by one of its inhabitants—of a night world, where that could be believed possible—brings this opera into the neighborhood of "Don Giovanni." The difference is that what Don Giovanni achieves by will Hermann is driven to by his blinding obsession with gambling.

That, at least, is the story the libretto wants to tell us. However, we don't see Hermann at the card table until the very last scene, by which time his music may have suggested that what harries him is of a different nature, for here the music has the ardor that's missing from the rococo intermezzo. Hermann—like Manfred in the symphony Tchaikovsky based on Byron's play, or like the nameless protagonists of the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies—is set apart (and, indeed, set upon) by fate, and, whatever one may make of Tchaikovsky's biography, one can't easily avoid feeling the drag of fate in these works as the drag of sexual desire against some psychological resistance. Hermann, of course, knows nothing of this, and it would be crass of any singer or producer to tell him. Mr. Heppner and Mr. Moshinsky, by leaving the hero in a state of shambling ignorance in the face of the compelled music he seems to stimulate and to sing, speak loudly of his frustrations.

THIS was the first new production at the Met to benefit, if that's the word, from the electronic libretto crib available in front of every seat. These "Met Titles" are markedly superior to the systems of most theatres: you can switch them off, and they don't become part of the performance's public discourse. They're private, and a gifted comedian can make a joke of their closet presence, as Bryn Terfel did in the role of Leporello earlier this season. But I'm not sure how useful the device will generally prove to be. The screens are dim. There's the bother of refocussing one's eyes all the time. And in such a complex polyphonic art does one need a rude new irregular bass line? As simple a thing as Yeletsky singing "Ya vas lyublyu" has so much going on: a character in a story addressing another in speech; a character onstage addressing another in song; a singer performing a role; a composer conveying, as a sober ideal, a love he can't share; a scale ascending; four fingers moving on a keyboard. To add, in illuminated letters, "I love you" is to add nothing. ♦

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VIRTUAL FRIENDS

BY DAVID OWEN

TELECOMMUTING would catch on faster if you could do it from your regular office. That way, you could combine the best parts of working at home (daytime movies, faxing in your underpants, post-breakfast napping) with the best parts of working in a faceless monolith of glass, concrete, and steel (free pens, free phone calls, secretarial intrigue). As a longtime telecommuter, I've wrestled with this problem for years. Recently, I found a partial solution: I've become a compulsive viewer of CNBC, the cable-television network that covers business all day long.

CNBC has a lot to offer the homebound worker, including thoughtful predictions about the direction of interest rates, and stock prices that glide continually along the bottom of the screen, even during commercials. What I love about it, though, is not its content but its companionship. I have come to view the members of the CNBC staff as my home-office co-workers.

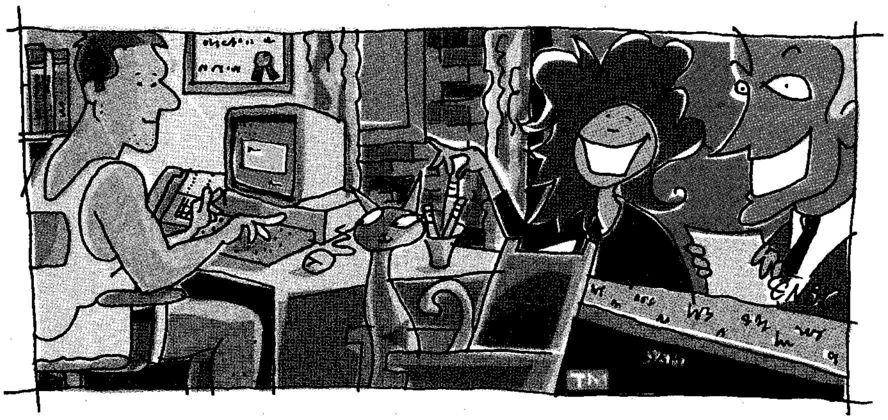
Turning on my TV the first thing in the morning is like coming in to work early and putting my feet up on my desk. Running CNBC in the background makes my home office seem not like a solitary prison cell or torture chamber but like a beehive of cheerful, important activity. No matter how unmotivated I feel about doing my own job, the people on the screen seem enthusiastic and engaged, even if all they're doing is discussing a sudden small decrease in the number of yen to the Deutsche mark. If I lose interest in some project of my own, I lean back and watch CNBC until I feel like making money again. If I really have to buckle down, I press the mute button on my remote control—the electronic equivalent of closing my office door—but I never turn off the TV.

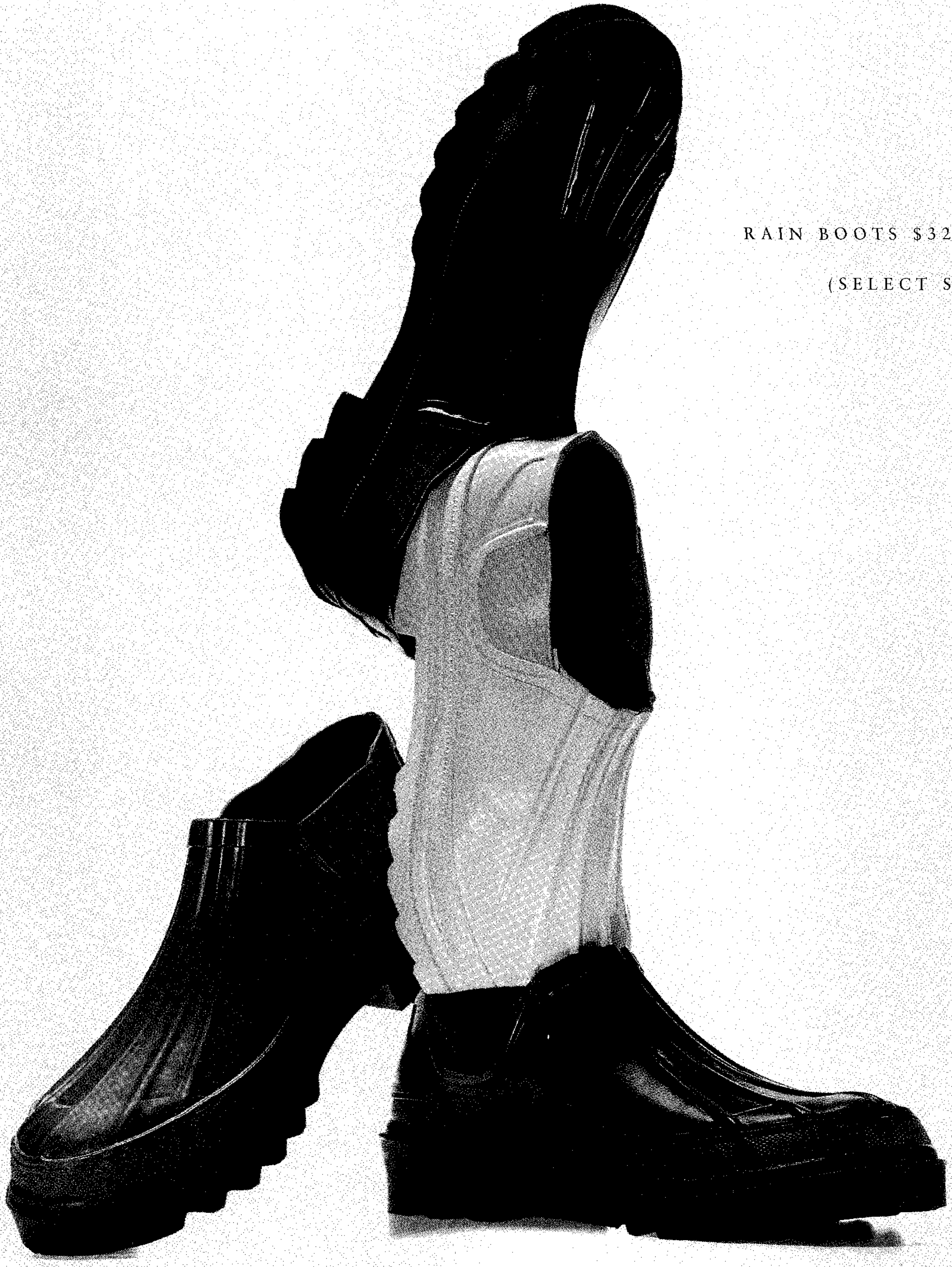
Virtual co-workers are better than flesh-and-blood co-workers in several respects: they are paid to be entertaining, they are always in the same mood, and they don't duck into the bathroom when they see you coming down the hall. Most of the people at CNBC seem to me to be about my age (which means, I suppose, that they are five or ten years younger), and some of the guys don't wear jackets. There's quite a bit of kidding around, even with the C.E.O.s of big companies. I can nurse my powerful crushes on Sue Herera and Maria Bartiromo without endangering my marriage or risking accusations of sexual harassment. (I'm pretty sure Sue Herera has a thing for me, too, although it's difficult to read the body language of someone whose body usually ends at her armpits.) The only guys in the office I don't really like are Dan Dorfman and a guy who smiles too much and always nods when he talks.

Now that I have begun to settle into my job with the folks at CNBC, I realize that I've had other virtual officemates during my career. For example, I now think of CNN's coverage of the Persian Gulf War—which I watched obsessively—not as a special news program but as an exciting startup company that I used to work for. In those heady days, I loved going to my office, and I often stayed there late into the night. There was also a brief period recently when I took a leave from CNBC to fill in as an assistant prosecutor on a big case out in L.A.

CNBC is not the perfect virtual office. There's no health plan, most of the men wear makeup, and I don't know who our boss is. I wouldn't presume to tinker very much, though. I might add an after-hours segment set in a bar. It would be like "Cheers," but the people having drinks would be Joe Kernen, David Faber, Ron Insana, and all my other best buddies from the regular show. I might also add a whole separate channel about the receptionists and mailroom guys, who invariably know the best dirt. In a decade or two, perhaps, CNBC will be available in a holographic format that will make the show appear to take place not on my television screen but in my actual office, at desks right next to mine.

I'm probably making it seem that all I do is work. Believe me, I don't. Today was a good example. At three o'clock this afternoon, a full hour before the closing bell on Wall Street, I said goodbye to the guys at the office and went over to ESPN for a round of golf. ◆





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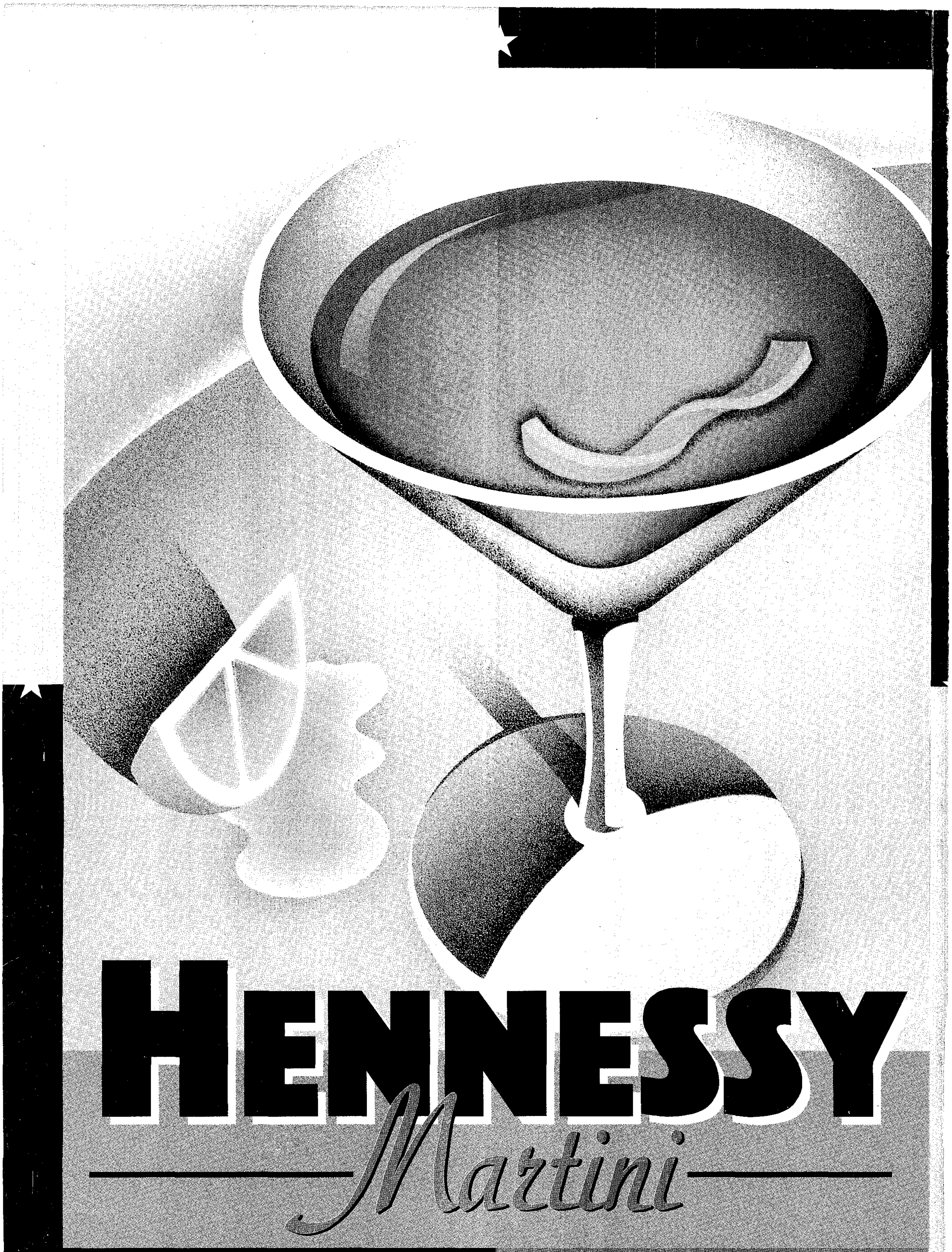
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